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of
The Church Universal

By
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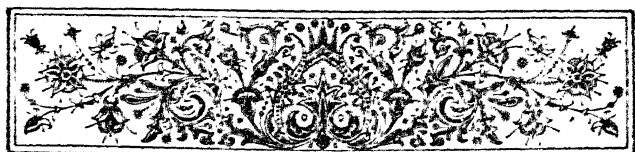


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“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Rev. vii., 10.



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THE RETURN OF THE IRON AGE.

IT is common to hear it said nowadays that this is a time of transition ; but a transition to what is not so well understood, and a few reflections on the subject may be helpful in arriving at a clearer comprehension of the matter.

Swedenborg tells us that the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw, the head of which was of fine gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of bronze, the legs of iron, and the feet part of iron and part of clay, represented the different Churches and ages which have existed on earth, from the celestial Church or head to the ultimate or Christian Church, which was represented by the iron

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and clay of which the feet of the image were composed¹ (*Heavenly Arcana*, 3021, 10,030; *Divine Providence*, 328; also J. Worcester's *Plants of the Bible*, p. 285).

We are also told that influx is from the inmost to the outermost or from the highest to the lowest, from which there is a return back to the highest or inmost (*Divine Love and Wisdom*, 171; *Divine Wisdom*, post., viii.).

We are further told that the progression of the Churches on earth has been like the growth of the individual man (*Apocalypse Explained*, 641; *True Christian Religion*, 762), and also that in the regenerating individual, when the state of manhood has been passed through, the successive states recur which preceded manhood:

“The celestial things of love are insinuated from the earliest state of infancy to childhood, and even to youth, as man is then and afterward furnished with outward and inward knowledges. When a man is capable of being regenerated, these knowledges are filled with the celestial things of love and charity, and so are implanted in the celestial things with which he was gifted in his progression from infancy and childhood and youth. . . .

¹ It is true that in the interpretation of the dream, Daniel makes Nebuchadnezzar the head of gold (Dan. ii. 38); but Swedenborg says that he represents the Lord's celestial kingdom, and at any rate the complete development of a segment of the Church can, by extension, be made to represent the growth of the whole.

They are first implanted in the celestial things with which he was gifted in his youth, then in those with which he was gifted in childhood, and lastly in those with which he was gifted in infancy ; and then he becomes an infant like those of whom the Lord says that of such is the kingdom of God " (*Heavenly Arcana*, 1616, 3183 ; *Heaven and Hell*, 295).

As a consequence of all this it follows that, if the progression of the Churches on earth was from the head to the feet, the re-progression must be from the feet back to the head ; and that, when the Christian Church, which represents the ultimate period and manhood of the race, has been consummated, the world will return successively through the iron age, the bronze age, the silver age, and the highest or golden age, or through the reawakened states of youth, childhood, and infancy.

Swedenborg states in many places that the Christian Church came to an end in his day (*True Christian Religion*, heading of n. 757, 758 ; *Heavenly Arcana*, 2910) ; and although we are told that the New Church came before its time (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 4, 9), yet Swedenborg has now been dead a century and a quarter, and there is little reason to doubt that a return of the states preceding the Christian era has already begun.

The progression of the human race from

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the head down to the feet was from internal to external, from good to truth, from feeling to thought; while the growth backward will be from external to internal, from truth to good, from thought to feeling. The human race reached the beginning of its lowest stage, the province of the feet, about the time of the Lord's birth, when representatives ceased (*Nine Questions*, 6); that this was probably the heel is evident from the words of the prophecy regarding the Lord and the serpent, since the province of the mind denoted by the heel could not have been fully developed in Him unless the race had reached this stage:

“The woman's seed shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. iii. 15).

In the Middle Ages the great attention paid to elaborating technical terms, exact definitions, and searching analysis of details, is like the toes of the feet (Daniel ii. 42). In the darkness of the Middle Ages, it seems likely that mankind terminated its ultimates, from which time there has been a return and “renaissance” of the old.

All perversion exists in the natural mind (*Divine Love and Wisdom*, 432), and in the growth of men back to the highest or celestial state from which they fell away, they must

gradually unravel the tangled skeins of evil-wishing and false-thinking that have been handed down generation by generation from their forefathers ; and this unravelling cannot begin at the stage when men first fell into evil ways, because men would have to be celestial in order to resist and overcome celestial temptations : it must therefore begin, when the Christian era is over, with the evils of the times preceding the Lord's coming into the world. In this way no doubt evil spirits belonging to the periods prior to the Lord's advent will be more fully subjected, and the hells gradually pacified and brought to a greater semblance of order. The Lord overcame all the inherited evil tendencies of men up to the time of the establishment of the Christian Church, but men have not yet done so. Yet they must conquer all this evil and falsity before, as a whole, they can "have right to the tree of life, and enter through the gates into the city."

It is a logical inference from Swedenborg's statements that the Church is returning through earlier and higher stages ; but if such is the case, there should be indications both of the departure of the old age and of the approach of the new.

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The iron in the feet of the image representing the Christian Church is the hard, inflexible truth of deductions from premises, of necessity, and the dire consequences of wrong-doing, and it is also the peremptory power of such doctrines; the clay is the sensuous perceptions of resemblances and analogies, which may be moulded into any form to confirm any doctrine, and this mingled with iron is the arbitrary and inconsistent dogmas of the Christian Church.

That the fanciful and dogmatic teaching peculiar to the Christian era is over, and a foundation laid for the new age, at least in the secular world, is plain. Instead of the old artificiality and disorder, equitable civil laws have been established, accurate methods of scientific observation are pursued, exact processes of reasoning are conducted, and realistic schools of art and literature are prevalent. These influences are rapidly transforming the religious world, and already many of the arbitrary and irrational doctrines which flourished in Christendom in Swedenborg's time have been almost completely dropped by Christian Churches. In addition to this decay of old beliefs, the scientific spirit within the Church itself is undermining and disintegrating the very foundations of Christian theology.

In the recent war between the United States and Spain, it is not difficult to see, in the liberation of Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippines from the blind and brutal tyranny of Spain and the consequent contraction of Spanish sovereignty, a lessening of the scope of arbitrary and unreasoning power in the world.

If, on the other hand, a new age is near us, there should be some signs of its coming.

Many writers think that a change has come over the spirit of men, and that new impulses are at work for the building up of new thought and character.

"We are entering on a new era, of which the twentieth century will be the beginning, and for which the nineteenth century has been a preparation. . . . Says Mr. William I. Stead (*The Pope and the New Era*, p. 20): 'Everywhere the old order is changing and giving place unto the new. The human race is now at one of the crucial periods in its history, when the fountains of the great deep are broken up, and the flood of change submerges all the old-established institutions and conventions in the midst of which preceding generations have lived and died'" (Josiah Strong, *The New Era*, pp. 1, 10).¹

Maeterlinck expresses similar sentiments :

"A spiritual epoch is perhaps upon us, . . . a spiritual influence is abroad that soothes and comforts,

¹ See also the preface to I. J. Andrews's *Christianity and Anti-Christianity in their Final Conflict*.

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and the sternest, direst laws of Nature yield here and there. . . . The signs of a life that we cannot explain are everywhere, vibrating by the side of the life of every day.

“There are centuries in which the soul lies dormant and slumbers undisturbed. But to-day it is making a mighty effort. Its manifestations are everywhere, and they are strangely urgent, pressing, imperious even, as though the order had been given, and no time must be lost. It must be preparing for a decisive struggle ; and none can foretell the issues that may be dependent upon the result, be this victory or flight. Perhaps never to this day has it enlisted in its service such adverse, irresistible forces. It is as though an invisible wall hemmed it in, and one knows not whether it be quivering in its death throb or quickened by a new life. I will say nothing of the occult powers, of which signs are everywhere, — of magnetism, telepathy, levitation, the unsuspected properties of radiating matter, and countless other phenomena that are battering down the door of orthodox science. These things are known of all men, and can easily be verified. And truly they may be the merest bagatelle by the side of the vast upheaval that is actually in progress ; for the soul is like a dreamer, enthralled by sleep, who struggles with all his might to move an arm or raise an eyelid. . . . Does it not seem as though the supreme cry of the soul were at last about to pierce the dense clouds of error that still envelop it in music?” (“The Awakening of the Soul” in *Treasure of the Humble.*)

The upward progression through the iron age would bring us to the characteristics of the times before the Lord's incarnation. He

was born during the reign of Augustus Cæsar, at a time when even the goad of ambition and the fierce love of conquest and dominion had become insufficient incentive to keep men any longer in the semblance of orderly life, and when they were sinking into so dense materialism and weak gratification of the passions as would have killed all religion from the face of the earth and destroyed the human race completely, but for His coming. Immediately before the Christian era we come into the times of Mark Antony, Julius Cæsar, Pompey, Marius, and others of their kind ; and in the return of the race they will have to face the terrific love of rule which dominated these men, and which seems to have been stronger and more aggressive in the iron age as a whole than in any other era. That such a love of rule is among us to-day seems evident from the desire to sway and to dominate which has recently caused men to form vast aggregations of capital in the form of trusts and other far-reaching business combinations and societies. No doubt the love of wealth and the pressure of competition are important elements in the formation of these combinations ; but nevertheless they are peculiar to our day, and their management requires strong controlling power

and complex intellectual ability. Moreover, contemporary writers detect a marked tendency to conquest and territorial expansion both in the United States and abroad ; and imperialism, Cæsarism, and similar words are in vogue to express the spirit of ambitious acquisition and comprehensive rule which is becoming everywhere active.

Another characteristic of the period antedating the Christian era was divination and astrology, the entrails of animals and other omens being carefully consulted by the old Greeks and Romans before declaring war, going to battle, or taking other important steps ; in fact, so prevalent were these and similar practices, Cicero wrote a special treatise on *Divination*, in which he skilfully combats the superstitions of his day. They also believed in revelations of hidden things inspired by the Gods, whether oracular or personal. No doubt their knowledge of astrology was the natural means by which the wise men from the east were led by the Star of Bethlehem to the manger where the infant Jesus lay. So we notice in our times a great interest in astrology, theosophy, spiritualism, occultism, and kindred systems, upon which subjects there is considerable recent literature.

A further peculiarity of the early Christian period was the possession by devils. It is no argument to say that this was not a real possession, but was merely a superstitious fancy of the Jews by which they explained what were really the effects of diseases ; because the possessing devils spoke to the Lord, whose true nature they knew much better than the Jews themselves, calling Him "the Son of God," and requesting Him not to destroy them. That these possessions were actuated by an evil love of power is evident from the possessing devils on one occasion being allowed by the Lord to enter into a herd of swine, which signify such a love. The manifestations of these possessions were of several kinds, some of which are related in the Gospels. The devils caused dumbness (Matt. ix. 32 ; xii. 22), cast into fire and water (Matt. xvii. 18), caused the subject to cut himself with stones (Mark v. 5), and threw him down (Luke ix. 42). Answering to this we have in the manifestations of hypnotism very similar results (see James's *Psychology*, vol. ii., p. 593). The patient can be made unable to open his mouth, legs may be amputated and children born without pain. Real sensations may be abolished as well as false ones suggested ; thus, the skin may

be burned without causing pain or leaving scars, and the flesh may be cut by knives or penetrated by needles without pain and without subsequent inflammation. There is a difference, however, between the old possession and the new hypnotism in its best form: the one sprang from the cruel desire of evil spirits to have power over others, while the other is being exercised to assuage pain and heal diseases. Even should there be no fundamental similarity between hypnotism and possession by spirits, evidence is not wanting of actual demoniacal possession at the present time (see *Demon Possession and Allied Themes*, by J. L. Nevius, D.D.). The Christian Science movement, also, has its prototype in the healing of Christ and His disciples. These manifestations, however, belong rather to the feet of iron and clay than to the iron age.

An additional feature of the iron age, a period which was the youth of the race, was its love for interior natural truth. In such writings as Lucretius' *Nature of Things*, Cicero's *Nature of the Gods*, Aristotle's *Politics*, Plato's *Phædo*, Æschylus' *Tragedies*, and the first book of Hesiod's *Works and Days*, one finds respectively a search after the inner constitution and operations of nature, the

essential character and governance of the god-head, the grandeur and immortality of the soul, the beginnings and laws of social organization, and profound ethical reflections and noble moral sentiments. I think one can discern in the best books of the present day the commencement of a similar tendency to get at the interior bearings and meanings of historical and scientific facts, and to seek for the deeper naturalistic truths in every province of thought. It is a tendency in which the reasoning faculty is especially active, just as it was in the corresponding period of antiquity. The chief intellectual progress of the race from the beginning of the Christian era up to the present has been in the direction of practical ideas, precision of details, experimentation, and science generally. Neither the creeds nor the literature of this entire period have been characterized by so exclusive an exercise of the reason as is exhibited in the writers of the iron age. However modern reasonings are based on well-ascertained facts, and not, like most of the ancient, on pre-supposed premises or imperfect knowledge. The increasing desire of the masses for intellectual and artistic education gives evidence,¹

¹ This more profound development of the naturalistic mind, which seems now to be going on, would naturally bring about the condition

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also, of a rising or deepening trend of mind in the race generally.

The characteristics of the people of the iron age are shown in their views on marriage, which Swedenborg gathered from them in the other world :

“ We do not live with one wife, but some with two and three, and some with more, because variety, obedience, and honor, as of majesty, delight us ; and these we have from our wives, if they are many. With one wife there would be no pleasure from variety, but disgust from sameness ; nor flattering courteousness from obedience, but disquietude from equality ; nor satisfaction from dominion and honor thence, but vexation from disputes concerning superiority. And what is a woman ? Is she not born subject to the will of the man ? to serve and not to rule ? Wherefore here every husband in his own house has, as it were, royal majesty ; and because this is of our love, it is also the blessedness of our life ” (*Marriage Love*, n. 78).

One cause of the few marriages and the large percentage of unhappy marriages at the present day is doubtless the desire in both sexes to have variety, to rule, and to receive honor and attentions from the many. Certainly such a spirit is destructive of all love of true marriage

of thought in the Christian Church which Mr. Worcester predicts in the words, “ the further pride of understanding the deep things of the Word, which the same self-love must still produce ” (*Matthew's Gospel*, p. 146).

and of its permanence. Perhaps when the consequences of such selfishness are fully pointed out to them both by precept and by experience, they will desist from these practices.

Other aspects of the iron age answering to those of our own age might be touched upon, such as speculative and theosophic pantheism, the deification of humanity,¹ and ecclesiastical ritualism; but sufficient instances have been given to prove the point at issue. It is true that some of the traits mentioned as common to the iron age and our own times have existed in other periods of the world's history; but nevertheless they are most prevalent and dominant in these two periods, and besides the interior naturalistic quality that characterizes these tendencies now was peculiar to the iron age alone.

If, however, the human race is to go back through the experiences of the iron age, it is going through them to conquer the evils and falsities of it, not to succumb to them as the iron age of old did. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," says the Lord, "but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"; and through Him the human race will overcome

¹ See Lewis Campbell's *Religion in Greek Literature*, pp. 289, 290, 295.

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step by step and stage by stage until it reaches its highest estate once more.

The new iron age, on its good side, would seem in the realm of intellect to be an age of exactness of observation and facts, clearness and accuracy of reasoning, philosophical and speculative thought, justness in the dealings of countries and individuals, and interior and comprehensive views of affairs; and in the realm of feeling, to be an era of lofty ideals, mature enthusiasms, and strong yet submissive will, — strong to resist what is hurtful and unjust, and submissive and obedient to the salutary laws of nature and God.

It may be necessary to strengthen the natural human will as a preparation for the Lord's new kingdom on earth. "No man who, having put his hand to the plough, looketh back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven" (Luke ix. 62); and Swedenborg says that, although the spiritual and celestial faculties of the human mind are unimpaired and unperverted in all, yet men cannot be let into them because they would not be able nor willing to remain in these states. "I seek not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me," the Lord was continually saying; yet He was strong enough to stand out against the whole Jewish nation,

to denounce the corruptions of the Scribes and Pharisees, to drive the money-changers out of the temple, and finally of His own power to overcome all the evil influences of men, angels, and devils and the weaknesses of the flesh crowded together in the agony of the cross :

“ I looked, and there was none to help, and I wondered that there was none to uphold ; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury it upheld me ” (Isaiah lxiii. 5 ; lix. 16).

In Swedenborg also, the pioneer of the New Church, we find this iron power of will. He was able alone, so far as this world is concerned, to resist the evils and falsities of his day, and to withstand the attacks of evil spirits so violent at times that he lay in his room as one dead for several days ; yet his natural will was in absolute submission to the Divine will, and we find in the records of his diary near the time¹ of his entering into communication with the other world, and thus into his mission of establishing the New Church, a struggling against and at length an absolute submission of his own natural will to the Divine will :

¹ This period (1744) was near the close of his philosophico-scientific writings, which seem to mark the returning iron age of his regeneration, and preceded the opening of the higher degrees of his mind.

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"How I resisted the power of the Holy Spirit, and what took place afterwards. The hideous spectres which I saw, without life,—they were terrible ; although bound, they kept moving in their bands" (p. 175, Worcester's *Life and Mission of Swedenborg*) ;

and later :

"God's will be done ; I am Thine, and not mine."
"God be thanked and praised ! I do not will to be mine own ; I am certain of it, and believe that Thou, O God, lettest me be Thine, all my life long, and that Thou dost not take away Thy Holy Spirit from me, which strengthens and upholds me " (pp. 186, 190 *idem*).

As it is the Apocalypse particularly that treats of the New Church (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 2), therefore we must have recourse to it to understand the present condition of the New Church and the still-surviving orthodox Churches ; and we must expect to arrive at this understanding by legitimate inferences as well as from direct statements, for Swedenborg was not permitted to investigate and reveal the exact state of the Church on earth (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 487).

We read in the twelfth chapter of Revelation as follows :

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven ; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And

there appeared another wonder in heaven ; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And the woman brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron ; and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And there was war in heaven : Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not ; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world ; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman ; and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ " (verses 1, 3, 5, 7-9, 13-17).

And in the thirteenth chapter :

" And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I

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saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion : and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death ; and his deadly wound was healed : and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast ; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast ? who is able to make war with him ? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies ; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them ; and power was given him over all tribes and tongues and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity ; he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth ; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon ” (verses 1-11).

Swedenborg explains the quotations above in part as follows (see *Apocalypse Revealed*) :

“The woman is the New Church, the child its doctrine ; the dragon is the faith of those who believe in a trinity of persons, in the duality of the person of Christ, and in justification by faith alone ; the battle of Michael

and his angels with the dragon and his angels, who prevailed not, is the combat and victory of the truths of the New Church against the false doctrines of the old ; the two wings of a great eagle given to the woman that she might fly into the wilderness is the Divine circumspection for the New Church and protection while it is yet among a few ; the flood of water cast out of his mouth by the serpent after the woman is reasonings from falsities in abundance to destroy the Church ; standing on the sand of the seashore signifies a spiritual-natural state. ‘And I saw a beast rise up out of the sea’ signifies the laity in the churches of the Reformed, who are in the doctrine and faith of the dragon concerning God and concerning salvation : ‘having seven heads’ signifies insanity from mere falsities : ‘and ten horns’ signifies great power : ‘and upon his horns ten diadems’ signifies the power of falsifying many truths of the Word : ‘and upon his heads the name of blasphemy’ signifies the denial of the Lord’s Divine Human, and a doctrine of the church not from the Word, but evolved from their own intelligence : ‘and the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard’ signifies heresy destructive of the church, because from the truths of the Word falsified : ‘and his feet were as the feet of a bear’ signifies full of falsities from the literal sense of the Word, read but not understood : ‘and his mouth as the mouth of a lion’ signifies reasonings from falsities as from truths : ‘and the dragon gave him his power and his seat and great authority’ signifies that that heresy prevails and reigns through its reception by the laity : ‘and I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death’ signifies that the doctrine of faith alone does not agree with the Word, wherein works are so often commanded : ‘and his deadly wound was healed’ signifies the cure of

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it here explained : 'and all the world wondered after the beast' signifies that then that doctrine and faith were received with joy : 'and they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast' signifies that it is as delivered by the leaders and teachers, who have made it prevail through its reception by the general body : 'and they worshipped the beast' signifies the acknowledgment by the general body that it is holy truth : 'saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him' signifies the superiority of that doctrine, because it can be contradicted by no one : 'and there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies' signifies that it teaches evils and falsities : 'and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months' signifies the opportunity to teach and do the evils and falsities of that doctrine even to the end of that Church, and till the beginning of the New : 'and he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name' signifies their utterances, which are scandals against the Divine itself and the Divine Human of the Lord, and at the same time against everything of the church from the Word, by which the Lord is worshipped : 'and his tabernacle and them that dwell in heaven' signifies scandals against the Lord's heavenly (celestial) church and against heaven : 'and it was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them' signifies that they assailed the Divine truths of the Word and overthrew them : 'and power was given him over all tribes and tongues and nations' signifies dominion thus over all things of the church, both those of its doctrine and those of its life : 'and all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb' signifies that all

acknowledged that heresy as a holy thing of the church, except those who believed in the Lord : ' slain from the foundation of the world ' signifies the Lord's Divine Human not acknowledged from the first establishment of the church : ' if any man have an ear, let him hear ' signifies that they who wish to be wise should attend to these things : ' he that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity ' signifies that he who by that heresy leads others away from believing well and living well shall be lead away into hell by his own falsities and evils : ' he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword ' signifies that he who destroys the soul of another by falsities shall be destroyed and perish by falsities : ' here is the patience and the faith of the saints ' signifies that the man of the Lord's New Church is explored by temptations from them, as to the quality of his life and faith : ' and I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth ' signifies the clergy who are in the doctrine and faith of the dragon concerning God and salvation : ' and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon ' signifies that they speak, teach, and write from the Word, as if it were the Lord's Divine truth, and yet it is truth falsified."

The first part of these interpretations is no doubt descriptive of conditions in the spiritual world ; but " the Divine protection of the New Church while yet among a few " certainly refers to this world, and it is only reasonable to apply to this world also the interpretations of the beast out of the sea as meaning " the laity in the churches of the Reformed who are in the doctrine of faith alone," and the power of

the beast to continue forty-two months as "the opportunity to teach and do the evils and falsities of that doctrine even to the end of that church and the beginning of the New Church." The question therefore is, When will this state of affairs occur?

In the work accomplished by "Michael and his angels" of overcoming and casting out from heaven the sensual advocates of the doctrine of faith alone and the denial of the Lord's divinity, Swedenborg was largely instrumental; and this portion of the Apocalypse was fulfilled in his time.

But, though the dragon and its doctrines of faith alone and the mixed human and divine nature of the Lord have been vanquished in the heavenly realm, have they been overcome in the realm of thought and life among men? Are not the influences of the theoretical materialism of the dragon still exhibited in the sensualistic antagonism to the supernatural and to the seership of Swedenborg that is prevalent? Again, while the doctrine of faith alone has been greatly weakened by the insistence on good works which has characterized the Churches in general during this century, has it entirely disappeared in either the teaching or the life of the Church?

It is certain also that a large part of the clergy and laity believe in three separate persons in the Godhead ; when yet the Lord says,

“I and the Father are one ; he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John x. 30 ; xiv. 9).

It is known that many of them do not believe in the complete Divinity of the Lord ; although He says :

“I am the first and the last.” “O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” “As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (Apocalypse i. 11 ; John xvii. 5 ; v. 26).

Swedenborg states that the period referred to by “a time, and times, and half a time” during which the woman, representing the New Church, was to be nourished in the wilderness from the face of the serpent, is the same as the forty-two months that the beast out of the sea was to be given power to continue, and the same as the thousand two hundred and sixty days that the two witnesses were to prophesy, and also the same as the three days and a half that the nations should see the dead bodies of the witnesses (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 562, 583 ; *Apocalypse Explained*, 761). Of the two witnesses it is written :

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“I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days. . . . And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and shall kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and tribes and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves” (Revelation xi. 3, 7-9).

Swedenborg explains the two witnesses as meaning the acknowledgment of the Lord's Divine Humanity and the necessity of a life according to the Ten Commandments, and the beast's killing them after they have finished their testimony as meaning that they will be denied and rejected by those who are in faith alone (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 490, 491, 499, 500).

It therefore follows that the things spoken of the two witnesses, as well as what is said of the beast out of the sea, will take place in the world during the continuance of the New Church among a few ; and doubtless, following the natural sequence of the Bible, the evils represented by the serpent are first to predominate, and afterwards those represented by the

beast out of the sea. The plain teaching is that, after the doctrines of the New Church had been given to the world, they would be opposed by Christendom. This is of course a part of the history of the New Church up to the present time ; but there has been no serious open denial of these two essential doctrines as yet, nor has there been anything like the rule of self-love and self-intelligence in the Christian Churches which is described by the words :

“And the beast opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them ; and power was given him over all tribes and tongues and nations (Revelation xiii. 5, 6).

The inevitable conclusion therefore is that such an overriding of the holiest and most vital spiritual truths, by the natural self-love and natural reasonings which are inherent in the character of present Christianity, will occur before the Christian Churches can be brought to a realization of the true spiritual worth and grandeur of the truths of the New Church. This is no doubt in accordance with the principle that the race, like the individual, cannot progress in a straight line, but only in an

oblique one, until it runs into so gross errors and perilous dangers that it is willing to seek the true path again. That a time of spiritual distress and desolation lies before the Christian Churches is evident from Swedenborg's interpretation of the words :

“The holy city the Gentiles shall tread under foot forty and two months” (Revelation xi. 2) ;

“And the man sware by him that liveth forever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half ; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished ” (Daniel xii. 7 ; *Apocalypse Revealed*, 489 ; *Summary Exposition of Psalms and Prophets* ; *Apocalypse Explained*, 610).

Besides, Swedenborg expressly states that the Roman Catholic Church will deny the divinity of the Lord's humanity (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 738), and according to his interpretation of the thirteenth chapter of Revelation the Protestant Churches will not be behindhand in this movement.

In the writer's opinion the world is on the eve of the states represented by the beginning of the thirteenth chapter of Revelation. It is generally acknowledged that some decisive change is being wrought, and that new phases of thought and action are to be expected. All

over the world there seems to be going on a strenuous contest for supremacy between the forces representing the old order of affairs and those representing the new; and while the new leaders have frequently been defeated or thwarted at the outset, they are eventually gaining control. This seems to be, in a general way, what is meant by a head of the beast being at first wounded unto death, but afterward being healed of its deadly wound.¹ If the above supposition is correct, then the fallacious arguments based on sensuous appearances which have heretofore been directed against the central truths of the New Church and of Christianity will be largely superseded by deceptive sophistries, supported by misleading facts and vigorous reasonings. But whether this condition of events is at hand or not, the New Church has been nourished in the wilderness from the face of the serpent a good many years, and it cannot be very far from the time

¹ More exactly and spiritually stated, the deadly wounding of the head doubtless represents the effect of the active opposition of those of the old era who are in good works to the unscriptural doctrines and selfish schemes of those who are portrayed by the beast out of the sea. The dragon of false materialistic teaching gives its power and throne and great authority to the beast of perverted idealism, because the beast is more audacious and more skilful in sophistry to uphold the theories of falsifying naturalism. The opposition to the beast comes from the good of the old era, not from the evil.

when the beast will arise out of the sea of naturalistic thinking, considering the rapid advance in intellectuality by the foremost nations of the world, and also the fact that the time of the serpent was to be "short" (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 558, 559). Of course the definite fixing of this period is valuable, in that when it begins it will set in motion forces which will work directly to bring the present Christian Churches to an end, and to make the New Church more and more prominent.

As to the first beginning of the iron age of classical literature and science, which evidently parallels the states of the Church denoted by the legs of iron of the image Nebuchadnezzar saw, Lubbock considers the transition period between the bronze and the iron age to have occurred at the time of the Trojan war (*Prehistoric Times*, p. 4, 5). The Trojan war is generally placed in the twelfth century B.C.; and Hesiod, who is supposed to have written in the early part of the eighth century B.C., thought that the iron age had already begun, and that he was living in it. Again, Tiglath Pileser I., who lived about a century before David, makes frequent mention, in his inscriptions, of bronze or copper, but not of iron, among the objects of plunder or tribute; while

Asshur-nazir-pal and Shalmanezer II., who reigned about a century after David, refer to iron occasionally. With reference to Jewish history and the Bible, therefore, we are perhaps warranted in considering the kingdom of David, commencing about 1000 B.C., as the beginning of the "legs of iron"¹; this agrees with the scriptural division (Matt. i. 17), and also with the fact that David was the true founder of the Israelitish monarchy, which was one of the new developments ushered in by the iron age. Saul's kingdom, which in some respects was similar to the more restricted authority of the judges of Israel, and in others contained germs of future institutions of the monarchy, may be regarded as a transition period between the bronze and iron ages.

In the history of the iron age we come upon the captivities of the Jewish people, who were carried away to Assyria and Babylon. Assyria denotes false reasonings about spiritual truths (*Heavenly Arcana*, 8185), and Babylon a self-

¹ If, as some scholars think, the second Psalm refers historically to David and to his investment with theocratic rights as king, the promise that he should break the nations with "a rod of iron" would be confirmatory of the above statement. The bent of David's character, too, is in accord with the significance of iron, as the knowledge or law of consequence and penalty; unlike the impulsive and passionate Saul, he was exceedingly politic and far-seeing, and accustomed to weigh beforehand the consequences of his actions.

love that rules by means of holy things (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 717); and these captivities of the Jewish people represented their spiritual enslavement by such false and evil activities. In the return, therefore, which the world must make through the early states of the race, it is natural that the strenuous pressure of these evils should fall upon it, and that acting under such influences Christendom should deny the Lord afresh, and crucify Him in thought as the Jews did in body.¹

In the *Apocalypse Explained*, Swedenborg explains the "time, and times, and half a time" as follows: "Time in the singular signifies a state of good, times in the plural a state of truth, both in regard to their implantation, and half a time signifies a holy state of the church" (761). The state of good is that which exists in every Church at its commencement, and is a state when the truths taught it are accepted with more or less simplicity, and lived according to as far as possible; after this comes a state when new applications of the old truths are desired, and I think that careful analysis of New Church thought will show

¹ A similar opinion is expressed by Rev. John Worcester in his interpretation of the story of the Israelites in Egypt before the exodus, *Lectures on Genesis and Exodus*, pp. 134-138, and also in his *Matthew's Gospel*, pp. 17, 140.

that such a state has existed for say thirty years past ; as to the holy state, there are not lacking indications of a more inward religious trend of mind in the younger generation of New Churchmen. The first state would correspond to the upper part of the feet, the second to the flexible ankles which can be bent in any direction, and the third to a part of the leg ; and paralleling the iron age of old, the first state may answer to the period from the birth of Christ to the accession of Augustus Cæsar (A.D., 27), the second to the changeful, transitional times between Augustus and Julius Cæsar (B.C., 27-44), and the third to part of the time from Julius Cæsar back to David. A half of this time would bring us to the Babylonian captivity of the Jews in the sixth century B.C., and also, in the return of the race, to a release from the self-love denoted by that captivity.

That Swedenborg expected the New Church to be established throughout the world is plain from his statement to Christopher Springer (Worcester's *Life and Mission of Swedenborg*, p. 335) :

“Two or three weeks before Swedenborg's decease I asked him when he believed that the New Jerusalem or the New Church of God would manifest itself, and whether this manifestation would take place in the four

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quarters of the world. His answer was that no mortal, and not even the celestial angels, could predict the time ; that it was solely in the will of God. ‘Read,’ said he, ‘the book of Revelation xxi. 2, and Zechariah xiv. 9, and you will see there that the New Jerusalem will undoubtedly manifest itself to the whole earth.’”

Besides the passage in Zechariah referred to, which is, “The Lord shall be king over all the earth ; in that day shall the Lord be one, and his name one,” these passages might be cited : “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord” (Isaiah liv. 13) ; “The earth shall be full of* the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah xi. 9). Moreover, if the New Church is to be in the wilderness of a few for a “time, and times, and half a time,” when the wilderness period is over it must spread among the many.

That the old Christian Church must end before the New Church can begin is evident from these words of Swedenborg :

“The reason why the faith of the New Church cannot by any means be together with the faith of the former or present church is, that they do not agree in one third, no, nor even in one tenth part. The faith of the former church is a faith of the night, . . . for human reason has no perception of it ; wherefore it is said that the understanding must be kept in obedience thereunto. It is not even known whether it is within man or without

him, because nothing of man's will and reason enters into it, no, nor charity, good works, repentance, the all of the decalogue, with many other things which really exist in the mind of man. But the faith of the New Church enters into a marriage covenant with all these, and conjoins itself with them ; and being thus in the heat of heaven, it is also in its light, and is a faith of the light. There is a further reason why the faith of the former church and the faith of the New Church cannot possibly be together, and that is because they are of a different kind ; for the faith of the former church springs from the idea of three gods, and the faith of the New Church from the idea of one God ; and as there in consequence arises a difference or antagonism to each other, there must inevitably, supposing they be together, be such a collision and conflict as would prove fatal to everything relating to the church, or in other words man would fall . . . into a state of insensibility as to spiritual things so that at length he would scarcely know what the church is, or whether there is any church at all. Hence it follows that they who have confirmed themselves in the faith of the old church cannot, without endangering their spiritual life, embrace the faith of the New Church until they first have closely examined, rejected, and thus rooted out the former faith, together with its teachings" (*Brief Exposition*, 103).

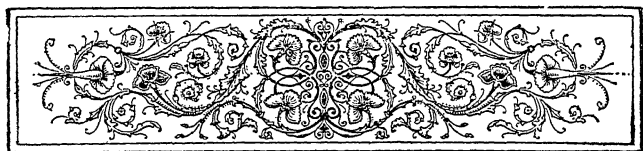
It may well be that in the close scrutiny and discarding, that are now going on, of a great mass of useless forms and partial and misleading theories and systems which the race has outgrown, the old Christian religion will share a common fate with the rest, and the New

Church take her place among the nations of the earth as the crown of all churches; and though this movement may cause much irreligion, and give the appearance of retrogression in spiritual thought and life, yet it is really in the line of progress. In the seething turbulence of factions, the throwing off of all restraints of tradition and religion and heretofore accepted maxims, in the determination to give every theory and fact a trial and a place, in the utter breaking up of the old rule of blind authority and the giving of his rightful honor and appreciation to the underling as well as the employer, in the complete destruction of all merely plausible and arbitrary teachings and the establishment of everything on the basis of experiment and fact and reason, there is truly the spirit of a new life, a new soul, a new glory for the human race that shall rise forever above the enthrallments of the senses and the oppression of natural passions. From this grave of the death of the old will arise the angel of the new, and the darkness and the conflict and the misery will be but a presage of a higher manhood as the gloom of the night is but a forerunner of the returning day. When the twilight of latest night palls the earth, the dawn begins to golden, when the

last stronghold of darkness prevails, the day
comes as a conqueror,

“And east and west, without a breath,
Mix their dim lights, like life and death,
To broaden into boundless day.”





SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

IN the preceding chapter on "The Return of the Iron Age," a parallel was suggested between the period from the close of the Roman Republic to the Augustan age and our own times; the statement was made that the race, like the individual, after attaining manhood, returns to the second childhood of old age through the successive stages which precede manhood; and it was shown in a general way that the words of the Apocalypse in regard to the serpent or dragon (xii. 9, 12, 13-17) have been fulfilled in recent and contemporaneous history.

As the Roman literature was the dominant literature of the world during the above-mentioned period, its most important aspects ought to give the general tendencies of the world at that time as reflected in it. The change which occurred in Roman literature from Cicero to Juvenal is very marked, as the following quotations will attest :

"The golden age of Latin poetry is subjective, and detail is subservient to a spiritual delineation; description is rather a sketch than a picture, and addresses itself more to the mind than to the eye. The silver age revels in objective detail, and dwells more on repulsive than attractive qualities, for the former are more obvious to a less keen insight" (Tyrrell's *Latin Poetry*, p. 268).

"The successive stages in the elegiac poetry of the Augustan age are marked by Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid. . . . With Propertius love is still ardent passion, but the characteristic reverence and seriousness, the *gravitas* of the Roman character, has deepened into gloom; in Tibullus love is tender affection mixed with melancholy, and there is still strong sympathy with the grandeur of the Roman character and state; in Ovid love is mere pleasure, intrigue, gallantry, and all *gravitas* has completely disappeared. Love is with him merely physical desire, and the lover aspires to nothing better than *bonne fortune*. The poet has forgotten to suffer like Catullus, and has learned how picturesque it is to *souffrir* like Alfred de Musset" (*Idem*, p. 118).

"Ovid was the last of the true poets of Rome who combined idealizing power of imagination with artistic originality. . . . The charm of Italian scenes still remained the same, but the fresh and inspiring feeling of nature as a great power in the world, a great restorative influence on human life, gave place to the mere sensuous gratification derived from the luxurious and artificial beauty of the country villa. The idealizing poetry of passion, which found a genuine voice in Catullus and the elegiac poets, could not prolong itself through the exhausting license of successive generations. The vigorous vitality which gives interest to the personality of

Catullus, Propertius, and Ovid no longer characterizes their successors. The pathos of natural affection is occasionally recognized in Statius, and more rarely in Martial; but it has not the depth of tenderness found in Lucretius and Virgil. Human life is altogether shallower, has the same capacity for neither joy nor sorrow" (*Enc. Brit.*, xx. 744).

There is discernible a gradual descent from the subjective ideality, the powerful, concentrated style, the intensity of passion, and the lofty intellectual enthusiasm of the Ciceronian age down through Ovid, whose works have much of the rhetorical tinge and descriptive attractiveness of his successors, to the facility of expression, sensuous imagery, picturesque description, and diffuse, varied, and practical realism which are conspicuous in the silver age of Roman literature.

In Cicero, we find intense patriotic feeling, lofty ethical aspirations, passionate emotional nature, vivid imagination and dramatic vigor, optimistic reflections on human destiny and the highest principles of conduct, and discussions of philosophical abstractions. Cæsar's *Commentaries* are marked by a clear-cut, concentrated, rapid, and comprehensive style, which is free from any personal coloring or affectation. Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*

is distinguished by imaginative insight, penetration into the secrets of nature and the deeper truths of human life, majestic broodings over destiny and death, and great speculative power; but in spite of his profound insight and lofty contemplation, religion to him was mere superstition and the source of most human miseries, and the main purpose of his poem was to prove the utter mortality of the soul. Catullus cared little for philosophy, but sang of man and man's heart; and his poems evince intensity of feeling, passionate simplicity, strong will power, and exquisite sensibility. With Cicero, Cæsar, Lucretius, and Catullus, the influences of the old era terminate; and, beginning with Virgil, we come to a transition period, which is continued through Horace, Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid.

It is just the reverse of this ancient evolution from the deeper and more intense aspects of thought and feeling to more shallow, luxurious, sensuous, and practical ways that we are confronted with in the modern transition from realism to idealism.¹ Taking up the parallel with contemporary literature,

¹ The so-called idealism of the first half of the nineteenth century was an idealism of introspective contemplation and romantic sentiment, and was a product more of refined outward feeling, æsthetic

it seems easy, after making due allowance for difference of time, individuality, and nationality, to trace in the mingled sensuousness, fancifulness, and realism of such writers as Coppée, Mendès, Zola, Swinburne, and others of their type points of close resemblance to the luxuriousness, lively fancy, and sensuousness of Ovid and his age. The feverish self-consciousness, irregular brilliancy, eagerness, audacity, and despondency of Verlaine are so similar to the characteristics of Propertius that Mackail, after speaking of the richness of sound, color, and sumptuousness of his rhythm, remarks: "But this new power of verse accompanied a new spirit even more remarkable, which is of profound import as the precursor of a whole school of modern European poetry. The Cynthia is the first appearance in literature of the neurotic young man, . . . who has dominated a whole side of French literature since Alfred de Musset" (*Latin Literature*, p. 125). The reverential supernaturalism, fondness for rural quietude, sustained intellectual power of description, and rapid succession of images displayed by Huys-

imagery, and reflective intellectuality than of profound penetration, comprehensive thought, and inward, passionate feeling, like the idealism of to-day.

mans are contained in many of the elegies of Tibullus. The united realism and idealism of Sudermann echo similar traits in Horace, who was "both the realist and idealist of his age." The tenderness, freshness, graphic power, and poetic beauty of Hauptmann may be compared with the same attributes in Virgil. The most recent writers, however, like Maeterlinck, Kipling, and Rostand, seem in a modified way to exhibit the characteristics of the writers of the Roman Republic. The imaginative sympathy, comprehensive patriotism, forcible directness and simplicity, and idealized realism of Kipling; the lofty ethical reflections, the intellectual emotion, and the esoteric mysticism of Maeterlinck; and the intensity, brilliance, and subjective fancy of Rostand,¹ appear to mirror in the more complex development of maturity the tendencies of a time which was the youth of the race.²

The foregoing shows clearly enough that the recent so-called decadent movement in

¹ The shameless immorality of Pierre Louÿs's *Aphrodite* is comparable only to the "terrible simplicity" of Catullus in some of his erotic poems. In the *Fortnightly Review* (lxiv. 110) Catullus is called the "intellectual god-father" of Rostand.

² See also W. D. Howells's article on "The New Poetry" (*North American Review*, clxviii. 581-592), for the nature of the productions of other recent writers.

literature from realism to idealism is the exact counterpart of the ancient reversed movement from idealism to realism, and that, as the name decadent implies, it marks the beginning of the decline of the race from the full vigor of manhood to the subsequent stages of life that lead up to old age.

The woman clothed with the sun, spoken of in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse, is the New Church (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 533), and the child she brought forth is the doctrines of the New Church (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 535, 543); but as the New Church doctrines were given to the world through Swedenborg, and bear the distinct impress of his individuality, the child must be the doctrines of the New Church as revealed through Swedenborg, and in fact all the particulars related to the man child were fulfilled in Swedenborg. Therefore, between the year 1745, the date of Swedenborg's admission into the other world, and 1772, the date of his death, we have a definite, fixed point in the fulfilment of the Apocalypse; from which point it will be comparatively easy to trace the application of the Apocalyptic prophecies to the occurrences of religious history, especially with reference to the New Church.

The dragon or serpent, as it is also called

(dragon evidently meaning here a winged serpent),¹ occupies a prominent position in the twelfth chapter, and it is important therefore that its correspondence should be clearly understood.

“The things of sense with man the most ancient people called serpents ; for just as serpents are next to the earth, so are things of sense next to the body. Reasoning from things of sense concerning the mysteries of faith they therefore called the poison of the serpent ; and the reasoners themselves they called serpents. . . . In ancient times they were called serpents who had faith in things of sense rather than in things revealed. At this day it is still worse ; for there are not only those that believe nothing but what they see and feel, but those who confirm themselves by deductions of science unknown to those of most ancient times, and thus blind themselves to a much greater degree” (*Heavenly Arcana*, 195, 196).

Consequently, the serpent or dragon signifies those “who form conclusions respecting heavenly things from things sensual, scientific, and philosophical,” the serpent denoting those whose reasoning is more sensuous and emotional, and the dragon those whose reasoning is more intellectual and speculative.

The opposition in the other world to the doctrines of the New Church by those who are

¹ See article “Dragon,” Hastings’s *Bible Dictionary* ; and *Spiritual Diary*, 3747, *Apocalypse Explained*, 714³.

represented by the dragon, and who denied the Lord's Divinity and believed in faith separate from charity, which opposition is signified by the dragon's standing before the woman ready to devour her child when born, and its battling with Michael and his angels, is described by Swedenborg in many places (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 537; *Heavenly Arcana*, 7293; *Continuation of Last Judgment*, 16, 28; *Spiritual Diary*, 5742, 5743). It is chiefly with the opposition and antagonism to the New Church teachings in this world, however, that this essay has to do. As early as 1766, we find an important instance of such antagonism in Kant's *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer, explained by dreams of the Metaphysicians*, in which he ridicules Swedenborg's *Arcana Cœlestia*. This attack, it is true, is more from a philosophical than a religious standpoint; but his contemptuous references to the *Arcana* as "full of nonsense," and "without a drop of reason," and his characterization of the doctrine of the Greatest Man as a "monstrous and gigantic fantasy," even if we take them as applying only to the visions or "things heard and seen," which Kant says "lie at the foundation of all the rest of his dreams," constitute a rejection of Swedenborg's statements

as to the conditions of life in the other world, which is plainly due to the inability to believe anything except through the medium of the senses or through reasonings based on their evidence, which attitude toward spiritual and heavenly things is denoted by the dragon of the Apocalypse.

At the time of the establishment of the New Church among the few who would receive its doctrines, which it signified by the woman fleeing into the wilderness unto the place prepared for her (verses 6, 14), we read that "when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the man child," and afterward that "the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood" (verses 13, 15). This signifies the molestation, reviling, and rejection of the New Church on account of its doctrines, and reasonings in abundance from the falsities of appearances to destroy the New Church (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 560, 563; *Apocalypse Explained*, 758, 763).

The persecution of Doctors Beyer and Rosen, who had accepted the teachings of the New Church, by the Swedish clergy at Gottenburg in 1769 and 1779 (*Odhner's Annals of New*

Church, pp. 87-100; Worcester's *Life and Mission of Swedenborg*, pp. 356-370), is apparently part of the fulfilment of the prophecy in regard to the persecution of the woman by the dragon. Another virulent persecution occurred in Sweden in 1788:

"The orthodox clergy and the literary followers of Voltaire now join hands against the New Church in Sweden. Kellgren and consorts call upon the clergy to have the Swedenborgians punished by the civil law, while the clergy rejoice in the revilings and ridicule poured forth in the atheistic press" (*Annals of New Church*, p. 142).

In the same year appeared Rev. Johan Möller's *Frank Views on the best method of treating Fanatical Vagaries and Erroneous Opinions in Religion, especially the so-called Swedenborgianism*.

"This work claims to be a systematic critique of the *True Christian Religion*. It recommends governmental violence and atheistical ridicule as the best means of annihilating the New Church. The book was approved by the Swedish Diet of 1789, and the author was elevated to the Bishopric of Visby as a reward for his zeal for orthodoxy."

In 1787 the philosophical attack on Swedenborg was renewed in Dr. R. Sheringson's *Dissertation*, which attempted to prove that

Swedenborg had borrowed most of his theology from the Neo-Platonists. This charge is utterly unfounded, as the fanciful mysticism of the Neo-Platonic philosophy despised all real science, and sought to establish a realm of supra-rational knowledge and intuition entirely independent of the reason and the senses, and in its general tendency as well as its particular tenets was wholly at variance with the doctrines of Swedenborg, which are based on true scientific knowledge and formulated by enlightened reason.

In American literature there are a number of attacks on Swedenborgianism, some of the most important of which are articles in the *Christian Examiner*, xxiv. 1 and 230 (Rev. G. E. Ellis, 1838); *Lectures on Swedenborgianism*, Leonard Woods, D.D. (1846); *Swedenborgianism Reviewed*, Enoch Pond, D.D. (1846); *Baptist Review*, i. 81, 201 (H. M. King, D.D., 1879); and later criticisms of Swedenborg discussed in *New Church Review*, i. 85; ii. 500.

It would take up too much space to give extracts from these books and articles. The writers all show more or less inability to comprehend Swedenborg's writings as a whole, and to deal with the questions involved on their merits. Their main arguments, which

are contradictory, are either that Swedenborg's works contain no truths that had not before existed in Christian theology, or else that his writings are dangerously heretical and the product of a disordered mind.

The foregoing are a few typical instances of the "molestation, reviling, and rejection of the New Church on account of its doctrine" which occurred both before and after its organization. All these attacks upon New-Church doctrines are based on outward natural appearances, and the copious, naturalistic reasonings adopted are well described by the water which the serpent cast out of its mouth after the woman that he might carry her away as by a flood :

"The reasonings of those who are meant by the dragon are all from falsities and appearances, which if they are confirmed appear outwardly as truths, but inwardly conceal falsities in abundance" (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 563).

We next read :

"And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth" (verse 16).

This Swedenborg says signifies that "the reasonings from falsities in abundance put forth by the dragonists fall to nothing before

the spiritual truths rationally understood which the Michaels, of which the New Church consists, bring forward " (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 564). The fact that the natural rationality of New Churchmen, which is signified by the "earth," has helped the woman, is plain from the polemic literature of the New Church, in which its doctrines are ably defended against the attacks made upon them by the orthodox church and others. Great assistance also has been rendered to the New Church by the rational appreciation of much of its teachings by such divines as Phillips Brooks, E. E. Hale, J. F. Clarke, and Lyman Abbott, and such authors as Emerson, Coleridge, and Carlyle, which assistance is foretold by Swedenborg in his interpretation of the same passage in the *Apocalypse Explained* (764) :

"This signifies that those who are of a church that is not in truths afforded assistance, and did not receive the crafty reasonings of those who were in faith separated from charity. This is evident from the signification of the 'earth' that helped the woman, as meaning a church that is not in truths; for here the 'earth' means the earth of the wilderness into which the woman fled, and where she had a place prepared of God. . . . The above is evident also from the signification of 'helping the woman,' as meaning to afford assistance to the New Church which is called the Holy Jerusalem; also from

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the signification of 'opening her mouth and swallowing up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth,' as meaning the keen reasonings of those who were in faith separated from charity ; for the 'flood' that the dragon cast out of his mouth signifies keen reasonings from falsities, and 'to open the mouth and swallow,' in reference to the church that is signified by the 'earth,' signifies to take away ; and as a thing is taken away when it is not received, it signifies not to receive. . . . In that church there are dragons who separate faith from good works, not only in doctrine but also in life ; but the others in the same church who live a life of faith, which is charity, are not dragons, although they are among them."

The twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse closes with the words :

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the remnant of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (verse 17).

This signifies :

"The hatred kindled with those that believe themselves wise on account of confirmations in favor of the mystic union of the Divine and the Human in the Lord, and in favor of justification by faith alone, against those who acknowledge the Lord alone as the God of heaven and earth, and that the decalogue is the law of life, accosting novitiates with the design of leading them astray" (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 565).

The *Apocalypse Explained* gives an addi-

tional reason for the wrath of the dragon, which is that now the "New Church is favored by many" (767). At no time during the existence of the New Church has the outside world been so favorable to it as at present. In the literature of the day one finds a number of Swedenborg's opinions expressed in a direct or modified way, and his views in regard to such questions as primitive religions, the origin of nature worship, and the parallelism between natural and spiritual things have so many able and learned advocates as to render impossible the ridicule to which they and his other ideas were subjected in the early history of the New Church. Modern research and discovery, also, have confirmed many of his statements; as, for instance, the mingled symbolic and magical character of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, which together with its antiquity seems to place its original composition toward the end of the silver age, gives historical evidence of the knowledge of correspondences and their perversion to magical purposes, which Swedenborg ascribes to this period (*Heavenly Arcana*, 1241, 1551, 4680, 6692; *Coronis*, 42). Hence, to those who are antagonistic to the New Church, the growing favor with which its doctrines are regarded in scientific and religious

circles must necessarily be a source of increased irritation and hatred.

It is evident that this verse describes the general attitude of the orthodox churches at present toward the essential doctrines of the New Church, so far as these churches are inimical to the same ; for it is the same dragon tendency which has opposed Swedenborg's teachings from the beginning, and which in the fulfilled prophecy of the last verse has been traced down to contemporary times ; and it is therefore natural that, with the near approach to the more interior evils portrayed in the thirteenth chapter of the Apocalypse, the dragon of naturalistic fallacious thinking should be wroth with the woman of the New Church, and seek to refute its truths and to thwart its aims (an illustration of this hatred is given in *New Church Review*, vi. 424). The verse appears to describe the dominant feature of the hostility of the orthodox churches to the New Church from about 1890 to date.¹

¹ Although the dragon and the serpent are spoken of in some passages of this chapter as if synonymous ; yet in verses 14 and 15 the serpent alone is mentioned, while in the preceding and the following verses it is the dragon that is referred to. This may be indicative of a transition from a religious theoretical materialism to a more realistic externalism and the converse, corresponding with similar changes observable in philosophy, literature, art, and music from the first third of the nineteenth century to the present time.

With the thirteenth chapter begins the return of the states of the iron age proper, which, as stated in the preceding chapter, extended from about 44 B.C. to 1000 B.C.¹ This chapter is divided into two parts, one treating of the beast out of the sea, and the other of the beast out of the earth. In a general way, the sea corresponds to natural thought, and the earth or land to natural feeling. The power of the persons signified by the serpent or dragon was of an exterior natural kind ; for “the serpent can injure only the lowest natural things in man ; but, unless it is of the viper sort, not the interior natural, still less the spiritual, and least of all the celestial” (*Heavenly Arcana*, 259) ; but those who have power to injure interior natural things in man are signified by the beasts out of the sea and earth.

The era of the iron age seems to be susceptible of a similar division into two sections, in which thought and feeling respectively predominated. The history of the race from Thales to Cicero records the development of the natural thinking faculties ; while previous

¹ It is noteworthy that, while serpents and dragons are repeatedly mentioned by Swedenborg as representative of the evils of the Christian era, the evils of the pre-Christian era covered by the iron age were represented under the forms of leopards and bears. (*Marriage Love*, 78, 79).

to Thales, to say 1000 B.C., the productions and life of the race are characterized by lofty natural sentiments and noble natural feelings rather than by great intellectuality. The Jewish Church, from about the middle of the sixth to the middle of the first century B.C., presents the same preponderance of thought over feeling. During this period, the influence of the lofty spiritual conceptions and profound emotion of the earlier prophets gave way before that of a new type of religious leaders, the scribes, who by their efficient and faithful instruction to the masses imparted a fuller meaning to the commands of the law ; and the institution of the synagogue then grew up, the service of which, with its free discussion and constant instruction, was far more intellectual than the old ritualism of the temple worship. It was an era of meditation and composition, rather than of deep feeling and action ; and as a result a large part of the Old Testament was then written or revised, and Judaism, as well as Confucianism and Buddhism, was born and developed.

There are several prophecies in the Word which converge to this thirteenth chapter of the Apocalypse. They consist chiefly of the eleventh chapter of the Apocalypse, the twelfth

chapter of Daniel, and the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew.

The forty-two months that the holy city, which means the doctrines of the New Church, should be trodden under foot by the Gentiles or the orthodox Christian churches (Apoc. xi. 12; Daniel xii. 7; *Apocalypse Revealed*, 487-489), is the same length of time that the beast out of the sea was to continue, and refers to the same period (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 489; *Apocalypse Explained*, 633). During this period symbolized by the "forty-two months," therefore, which Swedenborg says means the length of time that the old Church will remain in force before the New Church begins on a large scale, and which, as already shown in this article, is now at hand, there will be a powerful assault made upon the essential doctrines of the New Church and the writings of its principal supporters by those in the orthodox churches and elsewhere who are represented by the beast out of the sea. This assault is further evident in the killing of the two witnesses and the seeing of their dead bodies for three days and a half, which time means the same as forty-two months; for the killing of these witnesses signifies the rejection by the orthodox churches of the doctrines of the

58 Phases of the Church Universal.

Lord's complete Divinity and the necessity of a life according to the Ten Commandments as Divine laws (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 500, 505).¹

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, the Lord referred to the budding of the fig tree as a sign of the consummation of the age and His second coming :

“ Now from the fig tree learn her parable : when her branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its

¹ It is to be noted that Swedenborg gives a personal interpretation to the two witnesses as “ *those who* confess and acknowledge from the heart that the Lord is the God of heaven and earth, and that his Human is Divine, and who are conjoined to him by a life according to the precepts of the decalogue ” (*Apocalypse Revealed*, 490 ; *Apocalypse Explained*, 635). It is stated that the two witnesses are “ the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth ” (xi. 4), and previously it is said that the seven candlesticks are the seven churches (i. 20) ; therefore, as a candlestick denotes a church, the two witnesses would belong respectively to the two principal churches which head the second and third chapters, the churches of Ephesus and Sardis. In a personal sense, *all* the statements in regard to the two witnesses would be fulfilled in two men belonging to the above two churches who prophesied or taught with fulness and clearness concerning the states of the church while the New Church remained in the wilderness, and who, having passed through the successive stages, and conquered the evils all the way from the natural to the celestial plane, would have power to smite with every plague, which represent the opening of these evils, by applying interior spiritual truth to others. These two witnesses of the New Church seem to be meant by the two men seen by Daniel (xii. 5-7), and also by the “ nail ” and the “ battle-bow ” in Zechariah (x. 4, 5), Swedenborg being meant by the “ corner stone.” The 1260 days the witnesses were to prophesy are the same as the 1260 days the New Church was to remain in the wilderness (Apoc. xi. 3 ; xii. 6).

leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh ; even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know ye that it is nigh, even at the doors " (verses 32, 33 ; Luke xxi. 29-31).

The signification of the fig tree here is well explained in the following quotation :

"This was a sign of His coming, because the first effect of His coming would be an active interest in practical philanthropy and in all useful knowledge. Is not this spiritual sign now visible in the immense increase of benevolent feeling and work in our day ? in the associations for the relief of the poor, the sick, the insane, the imprisoned, and the unfortunate of every class ? in the fact that the pulpits of all the churches are inculcating the precepts of good moral life, instead of the arbitrary dogmas of the last century ? and in the advance of scientific knowledge, so rapid as to cover every branch of the tree of science with a growth that almost conceals the stock of a hundred years ago ? What possible explanation of this marvellous and sudden development can a fair mind suggest but the nearer approach of the Divine Spirit of wisdom and goodness ?" (J. Worcester's *Plants of the Bible*, p. 42 ; *Heavenly Arcana*, 4231.)

This wonderful increase in practical good works and useful outward knowledge has mostly occurred since Swedenborg's time ; but the shooting forth of the fig tree and all the trees, to which this development corresponds,

was given by the Lord as a sign only that His second coming would then be "nigh," "even at the doors." Although as a fact the consummation of the age or the last judgment and the end of the first Christian Church took place in the other world about the year 1757; yet, so far as this world is concerned, the Christian churches are very far from being at an end¹; and their judgment and consummation will probably be effected only when the writings of Swedenborg are brought more conspicuously to their attention than has been the case heretofore, and when, by their rejection of New Church truths, they accomplish their own judgment and condemnation; for a Church cannot live very long which rejects essential Divine truths emanating from Him who is the Truth (John xiv. 6). Moreover, there is a general feeling abroad, as evidenced

¹ So changed are the Christian Church's theology and standpoint from their construction of a century ago, or even from its very foundation, in spite of its present effort to return to the simplicity of primitive Christian belief, that it is no longer the same church it was when Swedenborg proclaimed its consummation, and might appropriately be styled the Neo-Christian Church. When the Christian Church, as a Divine dispensation, came to an end in Swedenborg's day, the life began to die out of its old ideas and creeds; and the New Church became the primary and most vital spiritual force in the world. This it is now, notwithstanding its present obscure position and inconsiderable numbers; and this it will continue to be throughout the ages.

by the religious literature of the hour,¹ that the second coming of the Lord is near.

As a sign of the time when Christians should desert their Church and its teachings, the Lord warned them :

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand) ; then let them that are in Judea flee into the mountains ; let him that is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house ; neither let him that is in the field return back to take his clothes ” (Matt. xxiv. 15-18 ; Luke xxi. 20, 21).

The abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel (ix. 27 ; xii. 11) is almost unanimously regarded as the desecration of the temple at Jerusalem by Antiochus Epiphanes, B.C., 168, who offered heathen sacrifices upon an altar erected over the great altar of burnt-offering. Swedenborg states that the abomination of desolation signifies the devastation of all good and truth in the Church (*Heavenly Arcana*, 3652) ; and in this connection it evidently denotes the devastation of the holy

¹ Such books as *The Approaching End of the Age*, H. G. Guinness, D.D. ; *Ecce Venit*, A. J. Gordon, D.D. ; *The New Era*, Rev. Josiah Strong ; the conclusion of Henry Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* ; *Jesus is Coming*, W. E. B. ; *God's Methods with Man*, Rev. G. C. Morgan.

things of the Church by a self-love which contemns the genuine truths of the Word, and constructs instead theories of its own which divert from men the light and inspiration of the Divine Mind.¹

Idolatry was a prominent trait of the iron age; and, while a literal idolatry is not to be expected to recur, we may expect an idolatry of the spirit, which is the placing of the false, self-constructed doctrines of men in the place of the Divine teachings. When this is done with doctrines formulated by those who are at heart antagonistic to true Christianity, and who are apparently the ones that are classed with hypocrites by the Lord (Matt. xxiv. 51), it will constitute an abomination of desolation in the churches on earth. Such spiritual idol-

¹ These statements in regard to the second coming of the Lord are not at variance with Swedenborg's teaching that it occurred during his lifetime, and consisted in the revelation to the world of the divine truths set forth in his theological writings. As the Lord's second advent and the New Church came before their time (Matt. xxiv. 22; Mark xiii. 20; *Apocalypse Revealed*, 4, 9), it is reasonable to infer that, had they not occurred when they did, there would have been a later period when the end of the Christian age and the Lord's advent would have taken place normally in the course of events; and this later time seems to be somewhere in the new era that is now before us,—perhaps at its beginning. If this view is correct, it would tend to make the Lord's coming in Swedenborg's day largely introductory, and preparatory to a more complete coming to the Christian churches later on by a wide dissemination of New Church theology.

atry seems to be meant by the worship of the image of the beast (Rev. xiii. 14, 15).

While the progression of Apocalyptic prophecy has been traced in the above pages down to the thirteenth chapter, the prophecies of which have been shown to be at the point of fulfilment, no concrete evidence has been adduced that the beast is now actually rising out of the sea of natural thinking. The predictions of the thirteenth chapter relate to the states of mind of the present younger generation,¹ and consequently much opportunity has not yet been afforded for their conspicuous appearance in religious literature. What their tendencies will be is apparent from the spirit of the dragon, in the orthodox Christian churches, which is boldly denying that the doctrine of the Lord's supernatural origin, and consequently His Divinity, is an essential of Christian belief. The following quotation is sufficient proof of this denial :

“ The first of the three articles mentioned in the Apostles' Creed, viz., the article regarding the conception and birth of Jesus, cannot be regarded as an essential of Christian belief, because it is neither mentioned nor implied in the teaching of Jesus. Jesus claimed to be without sin, but never intimated that His sinlessness was

¹ Born from about 1864 on.

due to a supernatural origin of His person. He taught that He was one with God, but also that this unity was morally conditioned. He said that the Father loved Him, and was with Him, because He always did what pleased the Father. He said that He abode in the Father's love because He kept the Father's commandments. He teaches, in the plainest manner, that His union with the Father is ethical when he prays that His *disciples* may become one, even as He and the Father are one. Again, Jesus presented Himself as the Messiah of the Old Testament; but there is no indication that, in His thought, this involved a supernatural human origin. We repeat, then, the statement made above: that the article regarding the conception and birth of Jesus cannot be regarded as an essential of Christian belief, because the teaching of Jesus neither mentions nor implies it" (*Biblical World*, xii. 155; *Revelation of Jesus*, chap. 5, by G. H. Gilbert, D.D.; cf. Keim's *History of Jesus of Nazara*, II. 39-68; Hase, *Geschichte Jesu*, § 23; Beyschlag, *New Testament Theology*, I., chap. 3, §§ 9, 10. In all these books the Lord's Divinity, based on His union with the Father as an integral part of the Godhead, is denied).

The subjoined extracts will serve to make it plain, however, that the beast of interior naturalistic thinking is in existence, and is already coming up out of the sea of outward and scientific knowledge:

"The reasons against the supremacy of the formula of the Apostles' Creed, 'conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,' can be briefly summed up by saying

that the wording of the New Testament scripture is in many places incompatible with the opinion that the earliest generation of Christians believed in the birth from a virgin. This statement sounds surprising, in view of the detailed stories of such birth contained in Matthew and Luke, with their unmistakably miraculous narrative; but it is nevertheless an irrefutable position. As against the direct testimony of the two accounts of the conception in the first and third gospels in favor of the virgin birth, there stands the indirect testimony of a large number of passages in the New Testament which are at variance with these accounts. . . . Of the three synoptical gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Mark is the oldest, and was to some extent the basis of the other two, especially as regards the historical, narrative elements. . . . It has no account of the conception of Jesus, nor any other prologue, but begins with His baptism in the Jordan. . . . Thus the oldest gospel which we possess, and the source of which was the preaching of the apostle Peter, contains no story of the conception; it is therefore to be concluded that the same was in no way relevant to Christian teaching. . . . It has been shown (1), that in a number of passages the narrative of the gospels militates directly against the assumption of the virgin birth; (2), that the effort to show by the genealogies the descent of Jesus from David is comprehensible only if Joseph was regarded as His real father at the time the genealogies were first drawn up,—this in fact the discovery of the Syriac manuscript has conclusively proved to be the case; (3), that there are two accounts of the miraculous antecedents of Jesus, which do not agree with each other; (4), finally that the one of the two narratives which appeared first was composed later out of various materials in support of the virgin

birth theory, while the other was from the outset written uniformly with this idea in view. These facts must be looked at against the background of the circumstance that nowhere else in the New Testament is the birth from a virgin stated, implied, or assumed" (*Geboren von der Jungfrau*, "The Testimony of the New Testament against the Teaching of the Supernatural Birth of Jesus Christ," by Paul Rohrbach, D.D., 4th edition, pp. 8, 9, 12, 30, 31).¹

If both Christ's parents were human, He Himself, no matter how glorious a type He might have attained to, would be only a man, and therefore not a fit object of worship. It is the unmistakable drift of the times, among the orthodox laity and clergy, to accord to Jesus at best a unique position as the highest of all men, but not a position as a fully Divine being, participating equally in the Divinity of the Father, and making as complete a unit with Him as the body makes with the soul.

There are also growing tendencies to treat the commandments of the Decalogue as civil and moral, but not Divine laws; and to regard religion as a sort of high-grade morality.

In these and other ways the naturalistic idealism of the beast out of the sea is making itself felt.

¹ Leopards are those who confirm falsities by the Word (*Marriage Love*, 78), especially through adroit, original, and complex reasonings.

The following conclusions result from the foregoing statements and references :

The world has nearly outgrown the era of practical outward activity and external naturalistic thought which has lasted since shortly before the Lord's coming to the present time.

It is just entering upon an era of higher and more interior naturalistic thought and feeling, which is a return of the states of men from approximately 44 B.C. to 1000 B.C.

While in this new era, which is at hand, the Christian Churches may get rid of many of the crude errors of former Christianity, the interior evils belonging to the era will bring them into worse errors, and they will reject the essential truths of the New Church now to be presented in a forcible way.

This widespread and forceful presentation of New Church theology will be the special second coming of the Lord to the Christian Churches, and also their judgment.

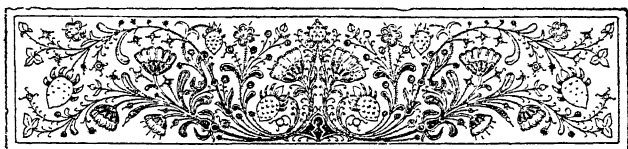
When the part of this new era which is covered by the beast out of the sea is passed, the New Church will begin on a large scale, especially among the laity.

When the other half of this period is over, represented by the beast out of the earth, the Christian Churches as now constituted, espe-

cially as regards the clergy and their immediate following, will be a thing of the past ; and the doctrines of the New Church, as revealed through Emanuel Swedenborg, will be the dominant religion of the whole civilized world.

These are the religious signs of the times as the writer reads them, and the course of events will be the best test of the accuracy of his interpretation.





PAST AND FUTURE PHASES OF THE CHURCH.

THE latest views of science on the question of the origin of man are succinctly expressed in Clodd's *Story of Primitive Man*, from which the following extracts are taken :

“ The common descent of man and apes is no longer to be doubted ; but man is neither the offspring nor the brother of the apes ; he is a sort of cousin ‘ more than once removed.’ And the answer to the oft-put question, Where is the missing link between them ? is, There is no missing link ; there never has been one. As with the likenesses and differences between the apes themselves, so with those between apes and man. The likenesses are explained by descent from a common ancestry ; the differences have slowly arisen in subtle ways. The Primates form the upper branches of the life-tree, whose highest branch is man. This topmost place has been won by him in virtue of certain advantages in his bodily structure, namely, his wholly erect posture, his hands, and his organs of speech. . . . Man alone has acquired the wholly upright position which has set his forelimbs entirely free to act as organs for handling, grasping,

and throwing things. The modification of the fingers, enabling them to be opposed singly, or all together to the thumb, and thereby to act as hooks or clasps, to form a cuplike palm, to grasp things large or small, and thus learn something about them, gave man a perfect organ without which he could never have won lordship over the earth. . . . Unlike the lion and other beasts of great muscular strength, the Primates had no powerful organs of attack or defence, and so took to living in trees, where their grasping organs stood them in good stead. . . .

“The evidence points to the divergence of the branch which includes monkeys and anthropoid apes, and of the branch which ends in man, about the close of the Eocene, or the beginning of the Miocene period. . . . It will have been noted that the materials for tracing the presence and movements of man, or of a creature who was ‘little less than’ man, and ‘more than’ ape, are too scanty and dubious to justify our saying positively that he lived in Western Europe before the first glacial epoch. The question remains open. But on the theory which all evidence confirms as to the divergence of manlike ape and apelike man in the late Eocene or early Miocene period, he must have lived somewhere. This brings us to the interesting question, In what part of the globe did man — *homo sapiens* — originate? And to that question there is no answer; only an approach to one. . . .

“We may now return to the sure ground as to man’s presence in Europe in mid-Pleistocene times, and through all the climatal and other changes which preceded what may be more strictly called the Human Period. On the threshold of this we must stay to learn that the periods of time in Europe, from the unknown age of man’s first appearance there, till about the Christian era, have been

divided by Danish antiquaries into the 'Ages' of Stone, — subdivided into the Palæolithic or Ancient Stone Age, and the Neolithic, or Newer Stone Age; of Copper or Bronze, and of Iron. This classification was anticipated by some ancient writers, notably by Lucretius in his great poem *De Rerum Natura*, in the following passage :

“ ‘Arms of old were hands, nails, and teeth, and stones, and boughs broken off from the forests, and flame and fire, as soon as they had become known. Afterwards the force of iron and copper was discovered; and the use of copper was known before that of iron, as its nature is easier to work, and it is found in greater quantity.’ . . .

“The implements of the Ancient Stone Age are alike in being of the rudest type, and neither ground nor polished; only roughly chipped. . . . The implements of the Newer Stone Age are markedly distinct from palæolithic implements, not only in being fashioned of other stones besides flint, of which material the older implements for the most part are shaped, but in exhibiting manufacturing skill of a gradually higher order, and in being ground to an edge and more or less polished. Of course chipping still went on. . . .

“The Great Ice Age gives us a rough-and-ready measure of the vast time during which men inhabited Western Europe in the Palæolithic Age. Compared with this, the Neolithic Age, so far as indicated by the time taken to form certain deposits in which its relics occur, is recent, say, 5,000 B.C. . . .

“It suffices to say that there is a general resemblance of form between the implements found, not only in the river drifts of southern England and France, but, Scandinavia excepted, of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. ‘Their identity,’ as Boyd Dawkins remarks, ‘shows that the Palæolithic man who hunted the arnee (a variety

of Indian buffalo) and the extinct hippopotamus in the forests of India ; who wandered over Palestine and the valley of the Nile ; who hunted the wild boar and stag, the mammoth, and probably the pigmy rhinoceros in the Mediterranean, was in the same rude state of civilization as the hunter of the reindeer, bison, woolly rhinoceros, and horse in the forests of France and Britain.”

What Swedenborg says about the earliest men, that they “lived first like wild beasts, and afterwards became spiritual men” (*Heavenly Arcana*, 286), entirely agrees with the present scientific knowledge on the subject ; and the facts show a gradual upward growth in Palæolithic men from their brutish and low condition at the beginning. They may have possessed some rudimentary kind of writing (*Heaven and Hell*, 237, 260 ; *De Verbo*, 4), and specimens of their art are still preserved in carvings of mammoths and reindeer on bone and ivory, and other relics.

Regarding the Pre-adamites, Swedenborg states in part as follows :

“The nature of the Pre-adamites, who were regenerated by the Lord and called Adam, was shown to me. One spoke to me in a characteristic way ; his speech was not distinct and quick, as is usual, and there was little life in the expressions. . . . He was not evil, but had little life left ; so that he was an external man, in whose externals however there were internal things, but

not much. His desire for glory in life was such as to exceed that of almost all others. He was in this respect like the Romans, but less so ; the Romans were braver than he, yet it was shown me that their valor was a madness " (*Spiritual Diary*, 3390, 3394).

The slow, indistinct utterance, the low yet not evil nature, and the strong desire for distinction would naturally be characteristic of men who had to wage a continual warfare, with rude weapons, against tigers, lions, and other ferocious beasts.

Science has attempted the rehabilitation of the Pre-adamic man. He was a great hunter, and lived chiefly on the game he slew and the fish he caught. He was powerfully built, and was short and thick-set in stature. His walk was shambling, like that of a gorilla or bow-legged person. His forehead was low and receding, with overhanging brows ; the nose was flat, and the nostrils were large ; the big, heavy lower jaws sloped away from the teeth, and the chin was very small and receding. " His feelings were rarely under control ; the impulse of the moment ruled his life. Cunning he was, because he had to live by his wits, —to kill and probably eat his foes, if he would not be killed and eaten by them. With the reasoning faculty but little developed, and

centred on bodily needs, such ideas as things around suggested to his twilight mind were a tangle of confusion, contradiction, and bewilderment." The physical description, however, is that of the early Palæolithic man.

The divisions of the Older and the Newer Stone Age, and the ages of Bronze and Iron, represent stages of culture in individual nations, and not uniform periods of time over the whole earth, as these different stages were attained by different peoples at widely varying times. The era of the Ancient Stone Age, however, seems to have been general all over the earth ; and the most reasonable scientific view in regard to its connection with the New Stone Age is, that the one gradually merged into the other without any wide interval between, although great climatic and geographical changes appear to have occurred during the transition time, which resulted in a redistribution of fauna and the severance of the British Isles and Africa from the continent of Europe by the sinking of the land attaching them.

Just what position the primitive men who preceded the Most Ancient Church occupy in relation to the Older and the Newer Stone Age is not certain ; but as it is stated that

men did not gain full mastery over the wild animals with which they had to contend until the Newer Stone Age, and as no great degree of spiritual wisdom could be attained by men while having to depend mainly on their physical prowess for their very existence, it seems likely that the Pre-adamites occupied the period of the Older Stone Age, and the men of the Most Ancient Church the early part of the period of the Newer Stone Age, beginning in Europe about 5000 B.C.

All the evidence of the relics of the Ancient Stone Age points to a very low and savage state, with at best only a wandering tribal organization, and with no signs of either domestic animals or agriculture ; while Swedenborg states that the men of the Most Ancient Church "never ate the flesh of beast or bird," but lived on "grain, especially bread made of wheat, and also the fruits of trees, vegetables, milk, and its products" (*Heavenly Arcana*, 1002), and that they had an organization of "houses, families, and tribes" (*Heavenly Arcana*, 470, 8118). Some knowledge of agriculture is implied in the words: "And the Lord took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress and keep it"(Gen. ii. 15).

Agriculture, pastoral tribal organization,

domestic animals, and polished instruments are characteristics of the new stone age which distinguish it from the old stone age. The Neolithic man made pottery and used the loom for spinning, and his skull indicates a much higher mental development. No doubt, among the skeletons that have been found there are some that belonged to the men who constituted the highest spiritual stage yet reached by the race,—the glorious Edenites of the Most Ancient Church.

Swedenborg's statement that the Most Ancient Church was formed of the Pre-adamites, who were regenerated by the Lord and called Adam, seems to indicate a close connection between the Palæolithic and Neolithic periods; and it is noteworthy that the skulls of the early Neolithic men, while much superior, are of the same "long-headed" shape as those of Palæolithic men. It is an interesting fact that several scientists think that modern representatives of the old Neolithic race are widely scattered over the civilized world in types characterized by small limbs, swarthy complexion, and dark hair and eyes, and that this race is slowly reasserting its old supremacy (Clodd's *Primitive Man*, pp. 98, 99).

The Newer Stone Age, however, must be

divided into the Golden and the Silver Age, which are referred to by many ancient writers, especially by Hesiod and Ovid. These ages, together with the Bronze and Iron ages, Swedenborg says run parallel with the states of the different Churches on earth (*Divine Providence*, 328), which are represented by the different parts of the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw (*Heavenly Arcana*, 10,030).

In accordance with the above facts, we seem warranted in placing the beginning of the golden age or Most Ancient Church, which Swedenborg says was established in Canaan (*Heavenly Arcana*, 3686, 4447), about 5600 B.C.,¹ and as, according to the most conservative estimates, the appearance of man on earth could hardly have been later than 10,000 or or 15,000 years ago (see H. N. Hutchinson's *Pre-historic Man and Beast*), it is evident that men existed a long time on earth before the Most Ancient Church was formed.

¹ The time from 1000 B.C. to about 1300 A.D., a period of 2300 years, covers the era of the natural degree of the mind; if the other two degrees, the spiritual and the celestial, required the same length of time for their respective development, it would bring us back to 5600 B.C. as the point of beginning. This date agrees so nearly with the approximate date of 5000 B.C. given above that we may accept it in the absence of exact chronology. Babylonian and Egyptian chronologies are too indeterminate as yet to afford much assistance in locating these early eras. Dr. Petrie gives 6000 B.C. as the date of the beginning of earliest Egyptian civilization.

From Adam until Noah, or the ending of the Most Ancient Church, we have the head of gold of the image of Nebuchadnezzar; from the time of Noah (B.C., 3300?) to Abraham, we have the silver age of the Ancient Church, which answers to the breast and arms of silver of the image; from Abraham (B.C., 2300) to David, we have the bronze age, which is covered by the Hebrew Church, and represented by the belly and thighs of bronze; from David (1000 B.C.) to Christ, we have the iron age of the Jewish Church, represented by the legs of iron (*Heavenly Arcana*, 5136); and from the birth of Christ (5 B.C.) to the time of the last judgment in the other world (1757 A.D.), we have the period of the first Christian Church, represented by the feet of iron and clay.

Although the Most Ancient Church continued until the time of Noah, the members of it did not remain all this time in the exalted state of the sensible reception of life from the Divine and the inward rational perception of truth from that life. Already in the third chapter of Genesis they are described as yielding to the enticements of the serpent-like senses, and as being banished at last from the heavenly wisdom pictured by the Garden of Eden; and from this time on their emotional,

perceptive life gradually lost its inward character till the natural will became utterly perverted.

Also, although the lowest era of the race began somewhere near the time of the establishment of the Christian Church, the full outward growth of the Christian Church itself does not appear to have been reached until the early part of the fourteenth century A.D., when scholastic philosophy which, applying logic to theology, was mainly occupied with such outward matters as logical rules, formal details, and acute metaphysical distinctions, came to its downfall, and a new order of things, which signalized the return of the race from its ultimate state, was manifested by the rehabilitation of ancient philosophies, the revival of classical literature called the Renaissance, and a renewed interest in nature and experimental science. Modern times date from this period. The following is an excellent description of the change that then occurred :

“ The beginnings of Modern Philosophy formed a part of the general human awakening in Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This awakening was, as every one is well aware, an awakening from a sort of ‘dogmatic slumber,’ in which human thought was wrapped up in the idea of a supra-mundane world, answering, as it now seems, to fancy and mere feeling, rather than to active sense, healthy understanding, and reason ; in which,

along with logical acuteness, there existed a certain enslavement to preconceived ideas and to authority in intellectual things. At the beginning, modern philosophy was on the one hand a revolt against a philosophy which, both by its content (which was constituted by the abstract and transcendental) and by its form (which was either mystical or else pedantically logical) had come to be wanting in power to satisfy a real human interest; on the other hand, an endeavor to substitute for that barren philosophy something more worthy of a strong consciousness of human dignity as such, and of the worth and grandeur of visible nature. This double character attaches to almost every form of early modern philosophy until, so to say, it reaches its majority, and even after that time; so that every new system, whatever else it may also be, is a protest against mere scholasticism. The substitutions made for scholasticism were in various directions, and of various degrees of completeness and originality. The revival of ancient learning and literature placed within the reach of the new impulse to philosophic thought,—accompanying and supporting like impulses in literature, the arts, and the sciences,—a noble wealth of ancient philosophical literature, which was eagerly seized upon and made the base for various schools of rehabilitated ancient philosophy. The new religious movement, Protestantism, found in ancient thinking (but to some extent also in mediæval, though non-scholastic, mysticism) a stimulant and possible helper, which it associated with itself and adapted to its need. The cultivation of the natural sciences by both empirical and speculative methods furnished material and basis for a philosophy of nature; the actual political conditions of the period, and the revival of the political doctrines of the ancients (particularly of Plato and Aristotle)

presented occasions for the framing and putting forth of systems of political philosophy." (B. C. Burt, *A History of Modern Philosophy*, § 2 ; see also Kuno Fischer, *History of Modern Philosophy*, i., chap. 5 ; J. Symond, *Renaissance in Italy*, i. 1-7 ; Robinson & Rolfe, *Petrarch*, pp. 3-56, 227-229).

The whole period of scholasticism, from the tenth to the fourteenth century, seems to be denoted by the ages of iron and clay (Daniel, ii. 42), "partly strong and partly brittle," like its logical acuteness on the one hand and its fanciful transcendentalism on the other.

In the age of Dante the downward and outward tendencies of the human mind seem to have touched their nadir. Such objective mentality is well displayed in the *Divine Comedy* ; and his elaborate minuteness of detail, his veneration for knowledge as "the ultimate perfection," his frequently fanciful argumentation and occasionally grotesque imagery, and his comprehensive grasp of physical geography and scenery, are all reflections of the externalistic but full thought of his time. Even the scientific element is represented, as is evident from the context of the passage in which he calls "experiment "

"The fountain to the rivers of your arts."

(*Paradiso*, ii. 96.)

Aside from scholasticism, with the dissolution of Charlemagne's vast empire, toward the close of the ninth century, the comparative unity of the feet ended ; and the disjunctive period of the toes began about the tenth century with the supremacy of feudalism, when the political power was split up into a number of separate independencies. The ascendancy of the humanists, from Petrarch in the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, with their mutual antagonism, heedlessness of the bond of common interest, and bitter struggle for individual distinction, seems to mark the return period of the toes ; and the more unified and powerful structure of the feet reappears with the Reformation under Luther and the establishment of the monarchical system.

The foregoing divisions give five general periods, answering to all the parts of the human body. These eras are referred to as kingdoms in Daniel (ii. 39-42), and the marriage views of the people belonging to them, as indicative of their attitude to spiritual truth, are related in Swedenborg's *Marriage Love* (75-79). Two more periods may be added, by dividing the time from Abraham to David, and making a second period from Moses to David, which parallels what Hesiod

calls the "Heroic Age," and by dividing the feet into the feet and toes (Daniel ii. 41, 42). This makes seven distinct periods.

In the growth of the individual these periods may be indicated in a most general way by the following characteristics: Considering the era of Palæolithic man to be represented by the embryo from the time of conception to birth, which is the beginning of the child's real, conscious existence (*Heavenly Arcana*, 3887; *Divine Wisdom*, iii. 5; Compayré, *Intellectual and Moral Development of the Child*, chap. 1), the first period would be that of earliest infancy, which is marked by movements expressive of feelings, especially love of parents, a lack of much power of muscular control, and a gradual development of the senses, this seems to occupy the first two or three years; then comes the development of memory, articulate speech, and childish friendships¹; then springs up a love of learning about things,—

¹ The facts that the men of the Most Ancient Church did not have articulate speech, but expressed their thoughts chiefly by facial motions (*Heavenly Arcana*, 608), that they did not have a written Word, and truths were not in their memories but in their hearts (*Heavenly Arcana*, 2896; *Apocalypse Explained*, 617), and that celestial influx is into the emotional part of the brain, while spiritual influx is into the cerebrum, which is the controlling part of the mind (*Heaven and Hell*, 251; *Heavenly Arcana*, 4325), seem to justify such a division between the periods of infancy and early childhood.

in its highest form, knowing about the Lord and heaven,—and a simple discrimination between right and wrong ; afterward arises an admiration for manly and heroic deeds, and an obedience to the precepts of good and dutiful conduct ; then comes the beginning of the growth of the reasoning powers, and the formation of lofty natural ideals ; then the seeing of things as they are, a comprehension of the realities of life, and the exercise of practical activities ; and, finally, the development of a keen and detailed perception of the nature and desires of the outward natural life.

During all these stages good and true impressions, or remains, are stored up in the mind by the aid of angels from corresponding periods of the world's history ; and when the lowest and most outward stage is completed then true regeneration begins, all that went before being but a preparation for the definite, intelligent, free-will consecration of the soul to spiritual aims and thoughts.

“The church from most ancient times to the end of the Jewish church progressed like a man who is conceived, born, and grows up, and is then instructed and taught ; but the successive states of the church after the end of the Jewish church, or from the time of the Lord to the present day, have been like a man increasing in

intelligence and wisdom, or becoming regenerate" (*Apocalypse Explained*, 641).

Starting at the lowest stage, or the feet, I think we shall find the course of upward regeneration corresponds to the seven periods of regeneration from the natural to the celestial state, which are described by the seven days of creation, and also from the state of manhood back again to the recurring state of infancy (*Heavenly Arcana*, 6-13, 1616). This most outward stage seems to occur about the twentieth year,—earlier, no doubt, with some and later with others :

"Good things of a threefold kind are signified by remains,— the good things of infancy, the good things of ignorance, and the good things of intelligence. The good things of infancy are what are insinuated into man from his first nativity even to the age in which he begins to be instructed and to know something ; the good things of ignorance are what are insinuated when he begins to be instructed and to know something ; and the good things of intelligence are what are insinuated when he is capable of reflecting on what is good and true. The good of infancy is inseminated from man's infancy to the tenth year of his age ; the good of ignorance from the tenth to the twentieth year. From this year man begins to become rational, and to have the faculty of reflecting on good and truth, and to procure for himself the good of intelligence " (*Heavenly Arcana*, 2280).

In the Bible narrative from the first chapter

of Genesis down to the last chapter of the Second Book of Kings, together with the prophets and psalms, we have a record of the spiritual phases of the Church from its crudest beginning (*Apocalypse Explained*, 294), probably most of the way through the iron age.¹ In their internal sense, the historical books describe various descending spiritual states through which the race has passed, and through which it will return in its ascent. The books of the prophets relate partially to the Lord's first coming and the establishment of the first Christian Church, and more fully to His second coming and the formation of the New Church (*Doctrine of the Lord*, 37). The five books of the Psalms give expression to the aspirations and abasements, the hopes and fears, the sense of union with the Lord and separation from Him in all the stages of the Church.

The gospels, of course, occupy the province of the feet, and have special reference to the states of the first Christian Church; and the

¹ A number of critics assign, with good reason, to the book of Daniel, at least in its present form, a date as late as the time of the Maccabean struggles, and some of the psalms were doubtless composed from the exile down to the same period,—B.C., 587-167. (See Fairweather's *Exile to the Advent*, pp. 26, 97, 130-132; Driver's *Introduction to O. T. Literature*, pp. 351, 367, 467-480; Sayce's *Higher Criticism and Monuments*, pp. 524-537; Hastings's *Bible Dictionary*, art. Book of Daniel.)

Apocalypse, which treats of the New Church, beginning at the feet, reaches back again, and gives the phases of the Church upward to the head. The first twelve chapters tell of the message of the Lord to all who will become a part of His New Church, of the opening of the internal sense of the Word, of the judgment in the spiritual world and the casting out of the evil, of the putting of the heavens in order and the first establishment of the New Church on earth, of the overcoming of the dragon of faith alone and the non-divinity of the Lord, and its rejection from the heavenly realm ; and finally of the coming down of the power of these false doctrines into the natural world, where they are supported by the specious arguments and sensuous reasonings of their advocates. This final serpent period constitutes the ankles, and closes the twelfth chapter.

In the thirteenth chapter are portrayed the errors of thought and life into which the Church comes during its search for interior natural truth and good. The beast out of the sea typifies an intellectual self-love made up of leopard-like deceitfulness of thinking, bear-like grasp of facts, and lionish argumentativeness. The beast out of the earth, which is farther on called "the false prophet," symbolizes

a more emotional self-love, the utterances of which, while appearing to be the veritable Divine truths of the Bible, are really the product of a false inward materialism. The period covered by this chapter answers to the legs of iron, and also correlates to the time from say the reign of Julius Cæsar to the beginning of David's rule. It is the first half of this phase that the writer thinks the world is just entering at the present time.¹

The fourteenth chapter opens with the picture of a lamb standing on Mount Sion, and follows with the representation of the Son of Man sitting on a white cloud; and it describes the phase of the Christian Church when it will come into obedience to heavenly truth, acknowledge the Lord's complete Divinity, and accept the revelation of the internal sense of the Word. This with the fifteenth chapter, in which it is said, "They sing the song of

¹ As applied to the New Church on earth, the several stages of the rising waters seen by Ezekiel (chapter xlvii. 1-12), which rose first to the ankles, then to the knees, afterward to the loins, and then became a river which could not be passed through, must represent the successive stages of the increase of heavenly truth in the Church. The similarity between the twelfth verse of this chapter and the second verse of the twenty-second chapter of the Apocalypse shows that it is descriptive of the growth of the New Church. In accordance with the above theory, the stage of "waters that were to the ankles" has been reached.

Moses, the servant of God," constitutes the correlative of the thighs and belly of bronze, and relates to the period from Saul to Abraham.¹

The sixteenth chapter gives a description of the pouring out of the seven bowls of the wrath of God, and depicts the unraveling of the falsities and evils into which the Ancient Church fell, the purification of the understanding, and the gradual preparation for the opening of the highest or celestial degree of the mind, — "that the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the sun-rising." The great change of state, when the spiritual degree is completed and the celestial begins, is denoted by the "great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth."

With the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters, treating of Babylon, begins the return of the evils of the Most Ancient Church, the

¹ As it is reasonable to suppose that there is a correspondence between the Greatest Man of the churches on earth (*True Christian Religion*, 762) and the Greatest Man of heaven which is formed from the men of the successive churches, and as the spiritual or middle heaven, which answers to the second or spiritual degree of the mind, extends downward to the knees (*Heaven and Hell*, 65), it is appropriate that the progression of the race above the religion of the natural mind, and its consequent increase in love for purely spiritual truth, which is a characteristic of the middle plane of the mind, should begin at the region of the knees.

evils of self-love and the corrupt emotions of the will, which have so far been only superficially removed. With the men of the Ancient Church, a new will was formed in the understanding (*Heavenly Arcana*, 4328, 1043); for the emotional will had been so twisted by the evils of their ancestors as to be utterly perverted. In the nineteenth and twentieth chapters, this opening of the interiors of the will is continued, and a glimpse is given of the commencement of the true celestial state in "the marriage supper of the Lamb"; and the beginning of the uplifting into the heavenly state of life received consciously from the Lord is the "first resurrection." The final judgment and discarding of all perverse and evil tendencies of the senses, and the bringing of both the outward and the inward mind into heavenly order and harmony, is told in the words :

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them."

The descent of the New Jerusalem seen in

the twenty-first chapter symbolizes the reception from the Lord of the full celestial state with all its blessed privileges, and the twenty-second chapter relates the confirmation and completion of this heavenly heritage, and the abundant perception of inward truth in the light of the Lord's constant presence in the soul, and gives a warning that all past evils must be abstained from, else this heavenly life will be lost again. Once more we are at the golden age, the Eden paradise of the race, an age which we may hope will, when it comes, endure as long as the "process of the suns." The serpent of self-life which of old caused man's banishment from paradise is cast out forever, and the same tree of life that grew in Eden is the regained possession of the New Jerusalem (Revelation, xx. 2, 10; xxii. 2; Genesis, iii. 1-7; ii. 9).

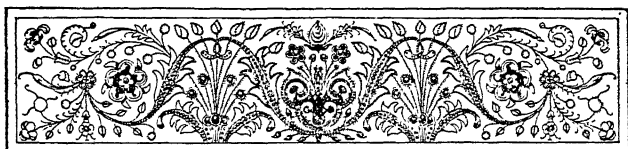
Yet even in this most beautiful estate, when there is "no more sea,"—when all the mind is spiritualized and there is no more merely natural thinking, the miry strain of evil still raises its discordant note, and without are "dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Thus the farthest ends of the circle meet in the animal and crudest

nature of earliest, and the bestial and debased nature of latest, man.

And above it all, directing all and the source of all, from the faintest rude tracing of incipient human life to the very last vestige of humanity, is the one God and Lord and Master :

“ It is He that sitteth above the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers ” (Isaiah, xl. 22).





DEGREES IN THEIR APPLICATION TO THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE.

SWEDENBORG tells us that there are three disconnected or discrete degrees in the human mind, and that, answering to these, there are three distinct heavens, and also that each degree of the mind and of heaven is further divided into three degrees ; as, “for anything to be perfect, it must be distinguished into three degrees” (*True Christian Religion*, 34, 608 ; *Heavenly Arcana*, 9825).

The three particular degrees within the three general discrete degrees are continuous or connected degrees ; but still they must participate in the characteristics of the three discrete degrees ; for in the case of the natural degree in man we are told that it is continuous, and yet, besides its own province, it reflects in a correspondential way the influences of the two higher degrees when these are opened in him (*Divine Love and Wisdom*, 256).

Moreover, as the lower degree is formed from next higher, the three discrete degrees are the of a similar nature, except that the lower degrees are more outward, being made up of compoundings of the interior degrees (*idem*, 184, 189, 190).

As to the respective salient features of these three discrete degrees, called natural, spiritual, and celestial, Swedenborg states that "the celestial degree is the degree of love, the spiritual degree is the degree of wisdom, and the natural degree is the degree of uses" (*Divine Love and Wisdom*, 232), and that they are related to one another like end, cause, and effect (*idem*, 202, 209) :

"The end with man is the love of his will, for that which a man loves he proposes to himself and intends ; the cause with him is the reason of his understanding, for through it the end seeks for mediate or efficient causes ; and the effect is the operation of the body, from and according to the end and the cause. Thus there are three things in man which follow one another in order, in the same way as degrees of height follow one another" (*Intercourse between the Soul and the Body*, 17).

These degrees differ from one another like feeling, thought, and words or actions ; for feeling is of the will, thought is of the understanding, and words and actions are of the

operation of the body directed by the outward mind. Accordingly, in treating of the three discrete degrees within the churches which have existed from the earliest times to the present, and from the members of which angels belonging to all the three heavens have been gathered, the characteristics of these degrees will in general be regarded as feeling, thought, and formulated expression or bodily activity.

It was shown in the foregoing chapters that the three discrete degrees of the Church are these: first, Adam to Noah (5600 B.C.-3300 B.C.); second, Noah to David (3300 B.C.-1000 B.C.); third, David to Dante inclusive (1000 B.C.-1300 A.D.). In Dante's age the downward evolution of the Church terminated; and, starting with Petrarch, "the first modern man of letters," the upward progression of the race began, which, like the individual in his progress from manhood to old age, will have to return through its former stages of manhood, youth, childhood, and infancy, which stages are all reflected in the churches of old. It was also set forth above that the stage of manhood is now nearing an end, and that the returning stage of youth is just beginning; and also that the spiritual side of this ascending

progression is described in the symbolistic imagery of the Apocalypse.

We shall therefore proceed to apply the qualities of the three discrete degrees to the states of the churches, and later on to apply those of the three continuous degrees within each discrete degree, and also to ascertain as far as possible whether the facts of history and revelation corroborate the theory advanced.

As to the nature of the Most Ancient Church, the duration of which occupied the highest or celestial degree of the Church as a whole, Swedenborg is our only authority, the rest of the world being not even aware of the existence of such a Church in the past. Outside of the Bible, the oldest literature now known to archæologists, such as the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, the *Precepts of Ptah Hotep*, and the *Babylonian Creation Epic*, was in all probability written not earlier than the latter part of the first division of the Ancient Church (3300 B.C.—2300 B.C.); and in fact the first chapters of the Bible itself do not seem to have been composed before this time, as it is certain that the Most Ancient Church had no written Word (*Heavenly Arcana*, 2896).

Swedenborg tells us in many places that the Most Ancient Church, which extended from

Adam to Noah, was characterized by love, and that from emotional life, received from the Lord in their wills, they had perception of what was good and true by the agreement or disagreement with their feelings, and also with the general truths they obtained from the correspondences of nature, by revelations from angels, and in dreams. Only with the last posterity of the Most Ancient Church, which perished through their false persuasions represented by the flood, did this perceptivity cease, although it had then become a perception merely of what was "worldly, corporeal, and earthly." Hence it is plain that the duration of the Most Ancient Church is parallel with the development of the highest discrete degree of the mind, which is one of love or feeling.

Although not strictly a part of our subject, there are two questions which it may be of interest to endeavor to solve here,—in what localities the Most Ancient Church was situated, and whether it possessed the art of writing. The garden of Eden, which, we are told, described the province of the Most Ancient Church, was bounded by the rivers Hiddekel and Euphrates, and by rivers of the lands of Cush and Havilah. The identification of the first two rivers is certain; and in spite of

the diversity of opinion among Biblical scholars as to the whereabouts of Cush and Havilah, it seems evident that Cush, as elsewhere in the Bible, means Ethiopia (*Heavenly Arcana*, 117), and that Havilah was a province somewhere in Arabia. The mistake of scholars in attempting to locate the garden of Eden along the banks of one river and its branches has arisen from a literal interpretation of the second chapter of Genesis, where its boundaries are mentioned. The Most Ancient Church, therefore, spread from the Nile to the Euphrates, in the fertile valleys of which sprang up the earliest known civilization of the race, a civilization which must soon have extended to Palestine as the great connecting highway. This is in accord with Swedenborg's statement that the Most Ancient Church was in the land of Canaan, which included all the territory from the Nile to the Euphrates (*Heavenly Arcana*, 4454). As to the art of writing in that Church, Swedenborg states that the first language among men on earth was from heaven, and that it had a few but not many points of resemblance to the Hebrew language (*Heaven and Hell*, 237; *De Verbo*, 14; *Spiritual Diary*, 4671); that Hebrew letters were in use among the most ancient

people, and differed but little from the Hebrew letters of to-day (*Heaven and Hell*, 260; *Smaller Spiritual Diary*, 4812). Hence, it seems clear that, while the Most Ancient Church had no written Word, they possessed a language, the letters of which differed little from modern Hebrew.¹ As great an antiquity is claimed for cognate languages by Mr. Petrie :

“To the dynastic Egyptian we must attribute the use of the hieroglyphic system. The early Libyan people had some elementary signary, which persisted in use in Egypt among the common people in spite of the hieroglyphic system, and which developed later into the Libyan and Mediterranean alphabets” (*History of Egypt*, i. 11).

The middle discrete degree of the mind and the Church, which lasted from Noah to David, was a degree of truth, and was distinguished by activity of the intellect and ideas of thought. Swedenborg says that the Ancient Church was entirely different from the Most Ancient Church, in that they possessed no perception from love, but had a kind of dictate which might be called conscience, which they obtained from learning spiritual truths through instruction. They were given a written Word,

¹ Hebrew is called “the language of Canaan” in the Bible (Isaiah xix. 18), which country was the seat of the Most Ancient Church.

full of correspondences, from which they were instructed; and gained their wisdom. This knowledge of correspondences in course of time was lost, or degenerated into idolatrous and magical symbolism; and the internal representative worship of the early Ancient Church was succeeded by sacrificial worship instituted as early as Eber, and established in the Israelitish Church by Abraham,¹ in which the meaning of the rites and sacrifices was little understood, although they represented heavenly things. These rites and customs were further elaborated in the civil and religious code of Moses,² which formed the chief religious instruction of the Church for many generations. History, as yet, has no knowledge of the difference between the emotional state of the Most Ancient Church and the intellectual state of the Ancient Church, which was relatively like that between infancy and childhood; but it is nevertheless aware of the great diversity in the civilizations of the two periods. Says Mr. Petrie of the predynastic

¹ Purely sacrificial worship, without any reference to its inner meaning, no doubt existed previously in a small way, but it was not the essential feature of the worship of the predominant Church (*Heavenly Arcana*, 1241, 1343, 2180, 4680).

² As to the question of the composition of the Pentateuch, see my article in *New-Church Review*, vi. 607-611.

remains discovered in Egypt, "They show that the inhabitants of Egypt at that age (about 5000 B. C.) had a totally different civilization to any known in the historic times" (*History of Egypt*, p. 8; *Popular Science Monthly*, lvi., pp. 626, 627); and a similar view is held by several scholars in regard to the prehistoric civilization of Babylonia (see Maspero's *Dawn of Civilization*, edited by Sayce, p. 575 and note, and editor's note in article on "Accad," Hastings's *Bible Dictionary*).

At David, we come to the lowest or natural discrete degree of the Church, which, as stated above, extended from about 1000 B. C. to about 1300 A. D.; but, as the Church is still in the same degree, the entire period from David to the present time can be considered as a unit. In this period we should expect to meet with great physical and executive activity, and a large development of formulated expression and doctrine. Through David's military and political genius, the barbarous Hebrew peasants were welded for the first time into a powerful nation; and indeed the aggressive activity and executive ability needful to found and to organize vast empires first made their appearance during this era, the kingdoms formed prior to this time being

comparatively insignificant. A marvellous growth of expressive language, eloquence, and poetic style was infused into literature during this period, David himself possessing a masterly control of rich and varied expression. Poetry had flourished in the world for ages before; but it was almost exclusively religious, and, besides, the elements of style and beauty and art were utterly subordinated to the direct expression of the thought. Again, the doctrinal systems which had existed previously were largely made up of correspondential facts and representative rituals, such as were contained in the pre-Israelitish Word and in the ordinances of the Mosaic legislation; but with the books of the Hebrew prophets an era of constructive theology or formulated religious thought was introduced that was never before witnessed in the world's history.

Although their successive development has been traced only in a very general way, it is sufficiently evident that the eras composing the three discrete degrees of the Church are really marked by the characteristics which have been mentioned as belonging to them. It should be observed, however, that the so-called discrete degrees of the Church are not truly discrete degrees, but only images, as it were, of

them ; for we are told that men, while they live in the world, are only in the natural or ultimate degree of the mind. Nevertheless, the higher degrees were opened in men during the earliest periods we have been considering, and the influence and enlightenment which they exerted determined the nature of the Most Ancient and Ancient Churches ; so that practically the result is the same whether the degrees were really discrete or not, except that the stages of the Church perhaps combine more closely at their transition periods than would otherwise be the case.

The next step will be to divide each of the three general eras given into their three continuous degrees, and to see whether the divisions made are marked by the distinctive features of these degrees, which are feeling, thought, and expression or action.

As to the part of the Most Ancient Church which constituted its highest continuous degree, when it was in the deepest love for the Lord, Swedenborg states :

“ These three churches, Man, Sheth, and Enosh, constitute the Most Ancient ; and yet with a difference of perfection as to their perceptions. The perceptive capacity of the first church gradually decreased in the succeeding churches, and became general. . . .

104 Phases of the Church Universal.

Perfection consists in the capacity of perceiving distinctly, which capacity decreases as it becomes less distinct and more general" (*Heavenly Arcana*, 502).

The return of the same phase in the Church of the future is treated of in the Apocalypse from the casting out of the serpent, called the Devil and Satan (xx. 10), to the end of that book. It was in the past a halcyon time when the serpent of the senses had not yet disfigured the Eden landscape of humanity, and when men lived innocently in full reception of the Divine life; and it will be paralleled in the distant future, perhaps with even richer grace, when the Church once more lifts herself to that glorious height, and discards forever the self-life and all its sensuous deceptions, accepting in their stead the heavenly inflow of God's own vivifying love.¹

In regard to the three churches (Gen. v. 12-18) which formed the middle degree of the Most Ancient Church, which was one of ideas of thought or truth, we are told:

"The church called Kenan is not to be numbered with the three more perfect churches; for perception, which

¹ This phase answers in the individual to the first year or so of infancy, before there is any articulate speech; for Swedenborg states that the most ancient people at first had no vocal language, but communicated their meaning by facial expressions (*Heavenly Arcana*, 607, 608).

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with the former was distinct, now began to become general, and comparatively as the first and more delicate membranes are to the nucleus of the fruit or seed. . . . By Mahalalel is signified a fifth church; by Jared a sixth church. As the perceptive power decreased, and, from being a perception of particulars, or more distinct, became more and more general or obscure, so also did the life of love, or of uses; for as is the life of love or of uses, so is the ability to perceive. From good to know truth is celestial. The life of those who constituted the church called Mahalalel was such that they preferred the delight from truths to the enjoyment from uses, as it was given me to know from experience with those like them in the other life. . . . Concerning the church called Jared nothing is related, but its character may be known from the church Mahalalel, which preceded and the church Enoch, which followed it, between which it was intermediate" (*Heavenly Arcana*, 507, 510, 511, 514).

Hence it is plain that truth and its delights were the dominant trait of this era.

The same stage is emblemized in the Apocalypse by the thousand years during which the serpent or Satan would be bound, and a part of the dead raised up to reign with Christ (xx. 1-6). It is a period when the soul receives, indeed, celestial feelings from the Lord, but not in fulness; the serpent of the senses still bearing rule, and shutting out from the will the unalloyed sunshine of the Divine presence.

Of the lowest degree of the Most Ancient Church, Swedenborg says :

“There were those at that time who formed doctrine out of the truths perceived by the Most Ancient and the succeeding churches, that it might serve as a rule by which to know what is good and true. Such were called Enoch” (*Heavenly Arcana*, 519 ; see also *idem*, 521, 609, 736).

Thus the third continuous degree of the Most Ancient Church was a period of formulated celestial thought or doctrine ; and as to the outward activity of the men who constituted it, Swedenborg speaks in many places of their vehemence and love of rule.

This period is coincident with the narrative contained in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth chapters of the Apocalypse, from the judgment of Babylon to the casting into the fiery lake of the beast out of the sea, and the false prophet or beast out of the earth. Babylon or Babel, signifying the “gate of God,” corresponds to a lust for usurping the Divine jurisdiction over holy things, and for using the truths of the Church for one’s own glory ; and the beasts out of the sea and out of the earth represent intellectual and emotion self-loves. These perverse passions are

manifest in the self-love characteristic of the last of the antediluvians, who desired to rule over all others, and who considered themselves and wished to be worshipped by others as Gods. Swedenborg, it is true, applies the Babylon of the Apocalypse to the Roman Catholic Church, in which a similar love of ruling over heavenly truths has been displayed by its popes, who have claimed Divine authority as the vice-gerents of God upon earth, and who have often abused their religious sway to obtain temporal dominion; but the Babylon of the human mind originated long before the Christian era in the sinful corruptions of the last division of the Most Ancient Church. Still, Swedenborg is unquestionably correct in his interpretation; for in the fourteenth chapter, without any previous reference to it, we read, "Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great" (verse 8). As the fourteenth chapter of the Apocalypse is descriptive of the beginning of the second or spiritual discrete degree of the Church in its upward progression, this passage undoubtedly means that the Roman Catholic Church will by that time have fallen. The beast out of the sea and the beast out of the earth appear prominently in the thirteenth chapter. They represent the evils attendant

upon the return of the emotional continuous degree of the natural discrete degree of the Church, a phase which is now about to record itself upon the pages of history ; and we can therefore appreciate the force of the Lord's comparison of the end of the Christian Church to the time of Noah, when the antediluvians were swept away by the flood of false thinking caused by these very same evils (Matt. xxiv. 38, 39).

The highest degree of the Ancient Church was one of love or feeling, as is evident from the fact that its very essence was charity toward the neighbor (*Heavenly Arcana*, 4448) ; and it came to an end when its charity grew cold, and its knowledge of correspondences was perverted or lost. This period seems to terminate with Terah, Abraham's father, when all internal worship had perished and idolatry reigned supreme (*idem*, 64, 1366).

The next or intellectual degree of the Ancient Church begins with Abraham, who instituted a ritualistic religion, wherein the worship consisted wholly of external ceremonies, —representative indeed of heavenly truths, but the spiritual significance of which was unknown (*idem*, 1282, 1361, 1375). During this period, which extended up to the time of Moses, large

and well-patronized libraries flourished in Babylon, in Egypt, and perhaps in Palestine, and the Egyptian and Babylonian literature and commentaries which have been handed down from these times bear witness to their intellectual activity; although, as it was the era of the late childhood of the race, evidences of profound mentality are not to be expected. Besides, it must be remembered that the era was that of the intellectual phase of the spiritual degree of the Church, when it would be likely that, with the loss of the deeper wisdom of the primitive Ancient Church and their knowledge of correspondences, the correspondences themselves, which, like the Biblical accounts of the creation and the deluge, were often put together in the form of a spirited story, would be literally understood and woven into fanciful narratives and fabulous tales, so acceptable to the growing minds of children. The extant mythological poems belonging to that age show that such was the case :

“ The Gisdhubar epic, on the one side, cannot be older than the formation of the Accadian equator and zodiac, which, as it begins with the sign of Aries, must be later than 2300 B. C. On the other hand, Accadian had ceased to be spoken before the seventeenth century B. C. . . . Perhaps, therefore, we cannot be far wrong in assigning the composition of the epic to about B. C. 2000, and

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referring the independent lays out of which it is composed to the centuries that immediately preceded. The bloom of Accadian poetry might then be placed just four thousand years ago, when the nature-myths, which had once expressed a very real and definite meaning, had grown faint and misunderstood, and become the subjects of numberless ballads and hymns." (Sayce, *Babylonian Literature*, p. 41 ; see also *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, 20, and *New-Church Review*, iv. 341).

The lowest or formulative degree of the Ancient Church reaches from Moses to David. In the last three books of Moses we find a vast formulation of definite statutes and laws, inwardly typifying heavenly truths ; and the whole period of Jewish and concurrent history, from the conflicts in the desert wanderings to the stormy times of the later Judges, is marked by great physical energy, by heroic actions, and often by lawless violence.

The time from David's accession to about 25 B. C. marks the emotional division of the lowest or natural discrete degree of the Church. During this period originated the grand outbursts of inspirational emotion that are contained in the prophetic books of the Bible, and arose the lofty poetry, the sublime art, and the intense oratory of the Greeks and Romans. It was unquestionably an era all aglow with inward natural feeling.

The reign of Augustus Cæsar to the tenth century A. D. comprises the middle or intellectual phase of the natural degree of the Church. Outside of the gospels and the Apocalypse, which constituted the most complete revelation of practical Divine truth so far made to the world, here occur the intellectual epistles of Paul, and the dissertational writings of the Christian fathers and many secular authors. The fire and intensity of the emotional period have waned, and have given place to a deliberate, contemplative thinking. Owing to the downfall of the Roman Empire caused by barbarian inroads, and to the prevalence of ignorance attendant upon the breaking up of the old civilization from the sixth to the eighth century, these centuries do not seem to bear the impress of a predominance of the intellect ; but the time from 1500 A. D. to 1900 A. D. represents the same general phase in the ascent of the Church, and it is very evident that the wonderful development of the intellectual faculties, and the noble creations in philosophy, science, and literature, achieved during these years, fully confirm our theory.

The lowest or executive and formulative degree of the natural plane occurs in its downward course from about 900 A. D. to about 1300

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A. D., and in its return from approximately 1300 A. D. to 1500 A. D. These centuries exhibit a ceaseless physical activity,—at times becoming an excessive and a chaotic turbulence; and they also witnessed an elaboration of the outward terms and formulas of expression unparalleled in history.

An outline has now been sketched of the discrete and the continuous degrees of the Church as a whole in both its downward and its upward progression, so far as this has gone; the year 1900 apparently being the beginning, or nearly so, of the return of the highest or emotional phase of the natural degree of the mind.¹

¹ While treating of the complete growth of the Christian Church as divided into three degrees of life, doctrine, and conduct, Dr. Briggs seems to coincide with the above remarks about the beginning of an emotional state, or state of love, in the Church, which will witness the highest no doubt, but nevertheless the last, phase of present Christianity:

“Christianity is about to enter upon the last and highest stage of its development. Holy love in principle and practice in the liberty of self-sacrifice is better understood in the Church to-day than ever before, and it is becoming more influential in the Church and in the world. The Church is about to put forth the supreme ethical influence of holy love to transform society and the lives of men” (*Popular Science Monthly*, lvi. 424).

Unquestionably, a great deal will be accomplished by the Christian Church in the next few centuries in the way of a thorough and scholarly elucidation of the literal and the interior-natural side of the Bible, and the noble work thus performed will doubtless serve as a broad and permanent scientific basis for the higher, spiritual truths of the New Church.

There are, indeed, numberless other degrees and variations in the states of the Church ; but those which have been enumerated give the most general changes in the churches of the past and future, and these changes lie at the foundation of all the other aggregate mutations of social phenomena, and serve as a means of interpreting them.

It will doubtless be noticed that the divisions of the states of the Church according to degrees are the same as those made in the earlier chapters in accordance with the several parts of the human body, with the exception that in the former the celestial degree is separated into its three component parts, while in the seven periods of the latter it is regarded as a unit. Each of these series of divisions helps to supplement and to verify the other.

It is evident that the three general phases of one discrete degree must bear some resemblance to those of the two other discrete degrees, the lower degrees being formed from the higher, and being simply more outward ; and therefore it might not be unreasonable to assume that the complete development of a phase of one degree would occupy a similar length of time as the same phase of another

degree. At any rate, a comparison of the chronology of the three divisions of the natural degree of the Church with those of the next higher seemingly evinces that the pairs of phases had a uniform rate of progression. Thus the first downward phase of the natural degree extended about one thousand years, the second about nine hundred years, and the third about four hundred years; paralleling this, 1400 B. C. answers to the time of Moses, 2300 B. C. to the time of Abraham, and 3300 B. C. to the probable date of the beginning of the Ancient Church; consequently, 3700 B. C. would mark the beginning of the formulative degree of the Most Ancient Church, 4600 B. C. the beginning of the intellectual degree, and 5600 B. C. the beginning of the emotional degree.

Before finishing this chapter, it may be interesting to make use of what data the subject affords to determine the time of the end of the present Christian Churches and of the universal prevalence of the New Church. The lowest division of the Church's ascending natural degree was from Petrarch to Luther, or from about 1300 A. D. to 1500 A. D., which is just half the time required for the development of the same phase in its descent (900

A. D.—1300 A. D.) ; and the period from 1500 A. D. to 1900 A. D., which represents the middle ascending phase of the same degree, is less than half the corresponding downward phase from 25 B. C. to about 900 A. D. These facts seem to show that the race is returning through its former states in half the time they occupied of old ; and should the same ratio be maintained in the future, as the past emotional phase of the Church's natural degree lasted about one thousand years (1000 B. C.—25 B. C.), and as the New Church will become prevalent at the end of this same phase, which is now beginning its ascending course, it is likely that five hundred years will elapse before the New Church finally receives its due veneration and acceptance as the real revelation of Jesus. It is true that Swedenborg states that the New Church will begin when the evils and falsities represented by the beast out of the sea have had an opportunity fully to work out their nature and teachings, evidently basing his view on the forty-two months, or three and a half years, that the beast was to continue to have power, — three denoting what is complete, and a half the beginning of a new state ; yet this new state may apply only to the appearance of the new evils and falsities

signified by the beast out of the earth. However, there is no good reason to doubt the correctness of his interpretation, which, moreover, agrees with that of a "time, and times, and half a time," given above. In this case, the New Church will begin on a large scale in 250 years from now, but principally among the laity who have not much affiliation with the orthodox churches; as Swedenborg himself applies the beast out of the sea to the laity, and the beast out of the earth to the clergy, of the Protestant churches.¹

These estimates are of course largely speculative; yet they have some reasonable foundation, and are the only dates so far hazarded that have not been purely conjectural. But whether the New Church comes early or late, whether with slowness or with despatch, whether to enhance the brilliance of a mid-day splendor of religious thought, or to dispel the stagnant darkness of a benighted world, come it will in the Lord's own time and in the race's own desire; and it will come not with the fitful gust of the passing creed

¹ In the *Apocalypse Revealed*, 701, the beast out of the sea is said to signify "the men of the external church," and the beast out of the earth "the men of the internal church"; for truth, which is denoted by the sea, is relatively external to good, which is denoted by the earth.

of an ephemeral religion, but with the eternal strength of a resistless whirlwind that will embrace the whole earth in its mighty folds, and sweep away forever the mists of naturalistic sophistry and the oppressiveness of materialistic gloom.



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